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REMINISCENCES

OF THOUGHT AND FEELING;

BY THE AUTHOR OF

VISITING MY RELATIONS.

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LONDON

WILLIAM PICKERING.

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PREFACE.

AS there are portions of this little work, which perhaps, in the opinion of some readers, would have been better omitted, or at all events, left to take their chance of publication after the writer's decease, it may be proper for me to state, that, although it has long been impressed upon my mind that a sketch of the leading features of my religious experience, might be useful to some of my fellow creatures, I had not the slightest idea of introducing it in this volume, when I began to write it; nor, for some time afterwards. I was insensibly led into the undertaking, and seemed to myself to be in the fulfilment of a duty, in proceeding with it.

It is not the first time by many, that I

have entered upon such an undertaking. I had once proceeded as far as five hundred pages of manuscript, in recording my own story; but not possessing any friend or acquaintance, whom I could properly invest with a discretionary power as to its disposal after my death, I thought it best to destroy it. It being perfectly clear to me, that if my story were to be written at all, it must be done in my lifetime, I have ventured, on the present occasion, to introduce the autobiography which forms the concluding part of this volume; if indeed, such a mere outline deserves that denomination.

M. A. K.

REMINISCENCES OF THOUGHT AND FEELING.

CHAPTER I.

IN the "Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey," the author quotes these words from an unpublished letter of Cowper's; "I know well that publication is necessary to give an edge to the poetic turn;—and that what we produce in the closet is never a vigorous birth if we intend that it should die there. For my own part, I could no more amuse myself with writing verse if I did not print it when written, than with the study of tactics, for which I can never have any real occasion." *

Whatever be the nomenclature under which we register our passing thoughts,—poetry or prose,—journal or note-book, homily or diary, the propen-

* Cottle's "Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey." P. 7.

sity to advance this cherished record from the obscurity of manuscript to the dignity of type, is almost certain to be eventually experienced. We would be read, in short, by the public, as well as by ourselves;—for when

> "We've aught to say in sermon or in sonnet,
> We like to know what others think upon it."

Unquestionably, there is an abundance of vanity at the root of this desire to publish our lonely effusions; but we must let that pass. There would, I take it, be few, if any artistic doings, without the stimulus of some degree of vanity on the part of the doer.

Not that it is anything of the artistic, fine-writing sort which I have here to set before the reader; for I am a very plain-spoken person, and one who, on principle, endeavours to stand aloof from that common but insidious mode of journalizing, which, for the sake of being interesting, or any other nonsensical thing that self-love worships, is for ever turning phrases, and making a sentimental much-ado about nothing. I like to come to my point by the shortest cut, and to grapple, if I can, with the little bit of truth that is to be got out of things and people.

Alas, how little that is, and how hard to find! as I am at this moment particularly prone to perceive, by having just returned from a call I have been making at the house of a gentleman who is a

neighbour, though I cannot say a friend, of mine; for his is a nature which leads him to make acquaintances rather than friends.

He is one of a class, which, though not always prominent, is always eminently prosperous and respectable in the eyes of that part of mankind who sail upon the surface of things, and who neither know nor care what may be beneath it. The thinker however, who dives below, and looks for truth in the well wherein she is said to reside, may perhaps discover that all is not so fair as it seems with this order of human beings.

It is one which exists, I think, in detached family groups; for I have generally observed its characteristics to be a sort of heir-loom property. The most marked of its features is pride;—a grim sort of thing, but very effective in assisting its votaries to the fulfilment of their respective purposes; and, wherever it is the mainspring of action, be it in peasant or prince, you may rely upon it that you see a rising person.

I remember well, some forty years ago, my father taking a lad of sixteen or eighteen, the son of a tenant of his, as a foot-boy; and nothing more wild or uncouth could be imagined than his first appearance, fresh from the country and the plough. But in less than a week, he had put on with his new livery, a new man, and began to hold up his head, and to announce visitors with as much attempted dignity as any footman in the land. He soon left

us, with a view to what he called "bettering himself," and proceeding from round to round in his particular ladder, the last we heard of him from the old peasant his father, was, that he had progressed to the situation of house-steward with a nobleman, and was making and saving money with a degree of steady diligence which promised him a very fair prospect of eventually settling down in great comfort and some importance, as a sort of gentleman.

"John allus said he'd be somebody afore he died," was the old man's summary of the case.

Now, had John been bred to the University, he would, as a necessary consequence of his distinct and purpose-like aims, have migrated through the changes of reading-man, wrangler, hard-working, money-earning private tutor, fellow and tutor of his college, bishop's chaplain, and rector of a fine living, and have closed these transmutations with a fair prospect of some day becoming a dignitary of the church.

The elements of worldly success are in people of this sort, and they cannot help getting on. They are brought up to it, and imbibe their notions of what they mean to be, and to possess, whilst they are spinning their tops and nursing their dolls; for, as I have said, this turn for promotion runs, I think, in families; the children of which may be seen to inherit it with other ancestral similitudes. At all events, thoughtful and observing individuals will, I believe, be able to recognize a sort of well-

doing in the world to be peculiar to certain domestic circles, and the members of such circles to be singularly distinguished for getting the best of every thing which their opportunities admit of their procuring.

But, if the truth must be spoken, these climbers to preferment are usually heartless, uncongenial people; unless indeed, when they fall in with those who are cast in the same mould as themselves. The freemasonry of instinct may then, perhaps, draw like to like; if drawing it can be called, which, in such characters, never approaches to the closeness of confidential intimacy; for persons of this kind are seldom or never confidential. They live at too great a distance from themselves to admit of this; and one cannot much wonder at it; for, how could a man well bear to talk with a heart which, if allowed to speak so as to be heard, would say to him, "Now remember that your business in this world is to get all you possibly can, and to let nothing escape you in the shape of fame, wealth, or honour, which you have the power to secure. Put a high price upon yourself, and devoutly eschew every sort of sentiment or habit which may cause you to lose caste with the set whose favour you are to seek and cultivate. Disdain and renounce all connection with inferior people; and by inferior people I do not mean merely the obscure, the poor, the ignorant, and the underbred; but such as hold an inferior place in the eyes of the world. Talent

or accomplishment, or genius, or amiability, or any other finely named qualities, are to be weighed by you not according to their intrinsic value, but their current value with the world. Wherever, and whatever, your lot for the time may be, find out the things and people connected with it whose own personal distinction of any kind may reflect some consequence upon you; and always be humble and patient in this part of your progress to the place you mean to make your own at life's table; for if you should at any time yield to a fastidious dislike of this great man's meanness and folly, or t'other's treachery and falsehood, or suffer yourself to adopt opinions and establish principles, upon any other ground than their immediate usefulness to your purpose of getting the most and the best of every thing that is to be got,—you will find it a hopeless task to attempt pushing your way through the crowd, and must be content to occupy a nook with a crew of nobodies to the end of your days."

Certainly, there could be no tolerating a heart that talked to one in this style, and therefore, nobody allows that hearts ever do say such things. Hearts, however, are very direct and straightforward in their aims; and, understanding them to represent the will, desires, and affections of the human being, and assuming that whatever we love and long for, reflects the truest picture of our nature, we should find perhaps, that were we obedient to that holy precept "Commune with your own

heart in your chamber, and be still," our interior companion would often set such a faithfully disagreeable portrait of our real condition before us, as would prompt us to take very speedy and effectual measures for rendering it more attractive.

But with regard to the subject of personal advancement, perhaps it will be said, that every body must desire to get on in life, and that to represent a wish as unamiable or erroneous, which is little less than universal in the human race, is, to say the least of it, to inculcate very gloomy and depressing doctrine.

It is not the wish to get on that I have any controversy with; for I am well aware that competence must be in a way to be secured, before the mind is sufficiently liberated from a thousand sordid hopes and fears, to rise to any generous or exalted effort. It is the never losing sight of "*getting on*,"—it is the fusing of every point and purpose of existence in that pursuit, and the setting that one object before the heart as all it has to seek, which I resist and disapprove of; and I believe if the matter were scrutinized, it would be found that every man carries a counsellor in his own breast, which with "a still small voice," resists and disapproves of it also.

And what a great matter is it to understand, and be in amity with, this counsellor,—this Divine moderator between the man and his heart,—this regulator of its wild impulses,—this calm, centralizing rebuker and restrainer of its excesses!

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy;" and I am persuaded that there is a very instructive and beautiful analogy to be observed in the two forces (the centripetal and centrifugal), whereby the planets are balanced and kept in their appointed orbits, and the two great agencies of human conduct; viz. the rushing, onward will, and the centralizing, attracting power of the Holy Spirit of Truth, "a manifestation of which," we are told in Scripture, "is given to every man to profit withal."

But few persons, it will be said, are sensible of this restraining power. Granted; yet that is no reason why they should not be so. They do not perceive its influence because there is a want of humble passivity in yielding to it. The will has become so imperious by long indulgence, and has so often and so violently torn itself away from its proper centre, that it runs on unchecked in its froward, zig-zag course; sometimes exploding and wounding itself, and sometimes wounding others. Could the planets have also found a will of their own, they would probably have long since upset the universe.

But to resume the point we were considering.

There is nothing like a clear understanding of terms in acting upon a proposition. A man proposes to *get on* in life.

Very good; let him do so by all means, for nothing can be more in unison with nature and reason than such a design. Everything gets on to its ap-

pointed end, and is intended to do so; but as the man has to shape his own course to his own object, and is not governed by necessity as the seed in the ground is, to take uniform steps to a uniform end, but is left to adopt such measures as seem to his particular choice to look like *getting on*, it is surely of the last importance that he should have a most distinct and ever present comprehension of the exact meaning of the term, and of the sense which he himself attaches to it.

Now, as far as I can judge, the gentleman whom I have just visited, considers "getting on" to mean getting up above other people; possessing more splendid appointments, a more aristocratic acquaintance; ignoring the customs, manners, and even the existence of those who have not ascended as high as himself in the ladder he is mounting; and the sitting down at last at the top of it, a pompous goose in almost everybody's eyes but his own.

This is surely a "lame and impotent conclusion" to arrive at; but it is the legitimate result of forgetting the consideration of moral progress while calculating the problem of success, and of viewing things not as they *are*, but as they *seem*.

Nothing can be called success but that which is accompanied with peace of mind; and peace of mind, be it known to all the world, is not a thing that slides into the lot as an accident, a matter that may or may not be there, just as it happens. No, no—your true "getting on," is first and firmly recognizing this ingredient of success as essential,

and as that which must be got and grasped before all other getting. As a preliminary step to its acquisition, there seems to be no objection to take as an auxiliary, the principle of pride which our man John found so helpful; only, it should be used on other grounds, and under another name. John's pride made him ashamed of remaining a plough-boy; that was the way it acted with him, and it was a false way; for there was nothing shameful in being a plough-boy. But the principle of shame in itself, is a true and right thing when properly understood and exercised, and leads more than any other to a real and enduring advancement in life.

The sum and substance therefore, of what might be said to the man whose pride is his stepping stone, is this; "If you would rise to true nobility, which means the nobility of *mind*, establish it as an abiding principle of action, never to do anything that you would be ashamed of. And observe always, the distinction between what *you*, the absolute judge, are ashamed of, and what the inferior *you*, the wayward will of *self*, would only be ashamed of, *if it were known*. The one is the king that rules in the conscience, and must be treated with the reverence due to a king; the other is a poor sneaking slave that would do every thing that is mean and crooked, even to the robbing of an apple stall, if not kept in awe by the rightful monarch. "Reverence thyself," is a profound maxim of ancient wisdom, and be sure to keep up

the reverence most, when most alone. Thus exercising your pride for the purpose for which it was bestowed, you will have its services on solid grounds, and will not exhaust the capacities of this useful agent in poor and paltry enterprizes. The real object for which you are working may still be self aggrandizement, but it will be the greatness of a well regulated, peaceful, honourable interior, that you keep constantly in view as the condition in which you hope to sit down, and say with the old song,

"My mind to me a kingdom is."

It is an inconceivable blessing to understand the true nature of things; for it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, that far more than half the misery that desolates the world, arises from the profound ignorance of mankind respecting the intrinsic value of the objects which they covet, and spend their best energies upon.

I do not say that these objects are without certain attractions, or that they may not be very pleasant to possess; but I *do* say to every body, know them for what they are, and estimate them accordingly; and do not make the fatal mistake of supposing that coronet, or coach and four, or any worldly matter whatever that may be dangling before the mind's eye, has any relation to the mind's peace; though, unhappily, it may have a very potent influence in promoting its poverty, in so far as its genuine worth and nobility are concerned.

CHAPTER II.

IT is, I imagine, universal with elderly people to believe that there never was any thing going on in the world in *their* young days like its doings (and, of course not better doings,) in their old ones; yet, making every allowance for this disposition of advancing life to suppose itself existing under a new and worse phase of affairs, I think I cannot be greatly wrong in designating the present era as certainly the most marked in alterations which are not always for the better, of any that has yet been chronicled in the page of history.

One of the most striking, and to me, one of the most disagreeable of its characteristics, is the tone of dominion and intolerable assumption of superiority with which it seems to inflate certain persons, who, "*in my young time*," as the ancients say, would have been accounted little of. Now, one can bear pretty well to give place to distinguished merit; but distinguished assurance without the merit, is hard to put up with. Another of

its marked and unpleasing features, is the overpowering hurry that attends it. Every body seems to be out of breath, and the greater part of the community even panting from the chase of something or another which all but themselves consider as the mere phantoms of imagination. Their observers and censurers have no time, however, to stop and set them right; for they are themselves also engaged in hunting, for nothing, probably, more real; but that is as it may be. "Only get on," they say, "and get off; and don't block up the way and lose time in talking."

As for the old proverb of "a nine day's wonder," that is extinguished and done with. Nobody spends nine days now in thinking about any thing. All is action, noise, and running about; and the whole world seems to be much under the influence of the same wild impulses and thirst for sensation which beset a parcel of schoolboys just broken loose from their lessons and got out into the play-ground.

A great part of this restlessness and eager desire for enjoyment, is, I think, to be traced to the facility which is given to the indulgence of the will, by the new and extraordinary circumstances in which we are placed by the agency of steam in producing a cheap and rapid mode of transit from place to place, and from object to object. There never was a time in which a little money was so available in procuring a great deal of pleasure, and a great deal of excitement. Cheap postage too!

what a quantity of agitation and eagerness to be "up and doing," has that been the means of stirring up in many a mind, which, without the presence of such a ready facility of following out its impulses, would have been content to fulfil its appointed lot in silence and obscurity.

I am quite aware, and am ready to acknowledge, that cheap travelling and cheap postage are, in many respects, great benefits bestowed upon society; but like everything else, they have a reversed side, and one which, as it strikes me, is too much overlooked. I cannot but think that the danger which attends these advantages in a moral point of view, is almost wholly lost sight of, in the contemplation and pursuit of the pleasure they afford. As I am quite of the opinion of Paley, who, speaking in an excellent common-sense sermon, of the natural disposition of the heart to console itself for its misdoings, by dwelling upon its good actions, proceeds to remark, that we need never spend time in meditating upon our virtues, for they may safely be left to take care of themselves; and that safer and wiser would it be to ponder upon our deficiencies, I think it would conduce more to right and profitable views of things, if we dwelt less upon the advantage which the present age affords in presenting us with facilities for doing as we like, and paused every now and then to consider how far the *doing as we like* is good for us. I do not seem to myself to be overstating the case when I say that more

persons are made unhappy from possessing the means and ability to please themselves, than from any other cause whatever; and that were it not for the inexorable force of circumstances which keeps the masses (to use a technical term) under the yoke, the world would be scarcely habitable by those who loved and sought for the blessings of peace and reflection. The simple fact is, that if human beings, even in an educated state, and trained by the discipline which intercourse with polished society enforces, are far more indebted for their good behaviour to the influence of artificial and conventional restraints, than to any intrinsically valuable principles of self-control, what can be hoped in the way of moral regeneration by inflating the minds of the multitude who do not know the meaning or the use of saying "NO" to themselves, with notions that the powers of nature, and the universe itself, are fast advancing to a condition of obedience to the human will; and that they themselves are progressing (how I hate that word!) to the throne on which man will find his legitimate resting place as the "monarch of all he surveys."

These thoughts occurred to me this morning, as I was ruminating upon the contents of a little volume of poetry which I had read last night, entitled "Reverberations;" and which, though containing some sweet and pleasing thoughts, is marked throughout with an aspiring, self-admiring spirit, which, as much as in any treatise of its size I ever

had the pleasure to read, bubbles up, and bubbles over, with notions of its being in the power of man to do whatever he pleases, not only with himself, but with the whole world. The author of it is manifestly one of a school of teachers and preachers very rife at this time. A bold, earnest, declamatory class they are, who look for the beatification of humanity in the present life, and anticipate a return of the golden age, when every body is to live in love and unity with every body, and evil doings are to be quite at a discount. I am free to confess that I have no sympathy with any thing of the sort. I do not believe this world is fitted or designed for the exhibition of any thing but the continual strife of good and evil; and however civilization and knowledge may advance, and human beings become enlightened, as they have been, and doubtless will continue to be, in respect to those matters which relate to their earthly condition, yet, in the far greater matters which concern their spiritual illumination and divine happiness, it is my belief that they will be, as to the greater part of them, just where they were, and what they were, since the creation. That is to say, they will love the world, and the things of the world, and follow after them as the chief matters they have to follow; and get and grasp as much and as many of them as they can, till death snatches their possessions away from them.

Turning from the ideas which this book of "Re-

verberations" had excited, to the perusal of Emerson's "Representative Men," from which, as from all that highly gifted person's productions, I cannot but derive both pleasure and instruction, I find just the same fault as in the other work, of setting up humanity in too exalted a point of view, and of overlooking many of its most painful and mysterious, but at the same time, its most prominent characteristics. One would think, from some of Emerson's statements, that man had it in his power to become little less than an angel; and that, but for this and the other obstacle, which an intrepid and right exercise of his will would remove, he might shine forth a sort of demi-god. And on this ground he takes his representative men, and exhibits them as models of this and the other form of excellence, which he assumes to be different modifications of the beauty of humanity.

All this looks fine, but it is intrinsically false; for the fact is, that excepting under one modification (that of faith in God), we are, by the strange necessity of the evil which is our own, and the very certain, though incomprehensible operation of the evil which is not our own, but by which we are frequently assailed,—such poor creatures, that, but for the help of our pride, we could never stand for a moment on any pedestal upon which our own, or the poetical fancy of any one else, might be disposed to place us.

"Just to think now," said I to myself, "of that

distressing case of poor ——" reverting to a condition of morbid suffering of which a friend of mine not long since was the victim, and which, though occurring in an individual of remarkable mental power, was of so exceedingly puerile a character, that, but for the real misery it occasioned, one would have been disposed to meet, and treat it with contempt.

I cannot well enter into any detail of this case, but as an illustration of it, and also of the opposition which our mixed and marred condition offers to the attempts at deifying humanity, of which I conceive such writers as those to whom I have alluded, to be suspected, I will give an extract from another author which bears upon the subject.

" But besides natural terrors," he says,* " which may seize any body at first trial before they have hardened themselves by custom, there are others which gather like rust upon the imaginations of particular people, making them distrust their own senses, and afraid that some sudden impulse should drive them upon extravagant actions, though they have never yet done any such, and have the strongest intention to avoid them. I know a very sensible man who once scrupled to take a bank note into his hand, for fear he should throw it into the fire; another, unwilling to go near a precipice lest

* Tucker. See his " Light of Nature," chapter on Fortitude.

he should have an inclination to throw himself down. I have heard of a lady that terrified herself when going a visiting, with a notion that she might tumble down on entering the room, or say something very rude."

"I am apt to suspect," he goes on to say, "that there are more of these whimsies in the world than one hears of; for people are shy of betraying their foibles, and it is but by chance, after being very intimate, that one gets any such confession out of them. One cannot expect a remedy in this case so much from reason as from resolution, or rather, care and vigilance; for authority grows by custom, and every power gathers strength by exercise."

I am not myself altogether a stranger to these vague mental horrors, and I have found upon experience, that the only way to overcome them, is to avoid all reasoning upon their folly, and very calmly to stand still, as it were, in spirit, and let them buzz about the mind, as one would let a fly buzz about the head and face; and by and bye, like the fly, they will be off. But no one I apprehend, will say, that however childish and contemptible these mysterious assaults may be, they can be experienced without humiliation and pain. It may be contended perhaps, that they are of comparatively rare occurrence; but that is a somewhat hazardous assumption. Our author cautiously observes, that "he is apt to suspect that there are more of these whimsies in the world than one hears of,"—and he gives

the cogent reason, "for people are shy of betraying their foibles;"—but I believe if the matter could be satisfactorily inquired into, it would be by no means rare to find persons more or less suffering from the sudden rush, and often the furious assault of wild impulses, which are so contrary to their real will and wishes, that it is impossible to suppose them the offspring of either.

The passion of fear is potent in man, and not unnecessarily, or unwisely, considering the mass of evil influences both from within and from without, amidst which his lot is cast; nor are those his safest teachers who would endeavour to avert his attention from the humbling realities of his evidently lapsed condition. He may, unquestionably, elevate himself above many of the corruptions which are a part of his sorrowful heritage; but not in the way of blinding his eyes to their existence; for there they are, and there they will be as part and parcel of the man, let philosophers dress him up how they like. But though they be there as part of the man, it may be in the same sense as the outer husk of the seed which we sow in the ground, is a part of the flower or plant which is to emerge from it. And here I must again make a quotation from the author to whom I have just referred; as he has a curious idea on this subject.

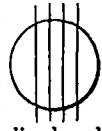
"As one stage of our being," he says, "is but preparatory to another, possibly we may, under the husk or shell of our outer bodies, carry a little

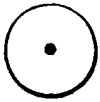
inner being of a spiritual kind, which is at our death to be born into the spiritual world; and that such as we are now making it by our particular habits and tempers, such will then be its nature, good or bad."*

This idea strikes me as very instructive, and not by any means unsupported by Scripture; for what can be the "inner man," the "new creature," &c., but somewhat of this kind? And as it is quite certain from the wisdom of God, as well as from the testimony of his dealings, that he gives to every created thing whatever is needful to its allotted condition, he cannot have left us destitute of the divine germ from which this holy nature is to be elicited. In fact, I believe that pious and thoughtful persons will, in general, be at no loss to observe and distinguish its agency within themselves; for when the individual has by diligent and humble attention, acquired a habit of understanding the nature of his inner world, the difference is quite remarkable between what arises in the mind whilst in a passive, obedient, and receptive state, and what is worked out in the strength and impetuosity of self-will. I once saw this curiously but very forcibly illustrated, by a gentleman of great sagacity, who was rather sharply lecturing a person for yielding to infirmity of purpose and general instability. "Your mind is hot," said he, "with per-

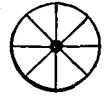
* Tucker in his "Light of Nature."

petual friction; and whatever is put into it, acts like butter in a frying pan. There is a vast hissing and sputteration, and much is expected to come of it, but the next minute beholds it melted away, and there is an end of it. See here," he continued, hastily drawing the following diagrams, "here is the mind, as it ought *not* to be, with all its thoughts, and purposes, and perceptions, riddling through it as through a sieve. Here, on the contrary, is the





mind as it ought to be, centralized and simple. This mind is always at home, and always therefore, ready for whatever may be put into it. Consequently it draws knowledge to itself, and what it receives, it *radiates* in this simple and orderly way;" and he then drew this third figure.



"But how am I to keep '*at home*,' as you call it," said the poor delinquent, "when a thousand anxieties and vexations are goading me to seek after something to allay them?"

"In vain will you let your mind run out after help in times of trouble," he replied; "it is like putting to sea in a storm. Sit still, and *feel after* your principles, and if you find none that furnish you with somewhat of a stay and prop, and which point you to quietness and silent submission, depend upon it you have never yet learned Truth from the Spirit of Truth, whatever notions thereof

you may have picked up from this and the other description of it."

No lesson indeed of a practical kind (and all lessons ought to be practical) requires to be so often repeated, as that which enjoins upon the mind a state of passivity;—for what an electric thing is it! How does it dart forth after this and that, flitting from sweet to sweet (for it never willingly tastes of bitter things), and "feeding itself without fear!" This is always dangerous, and commonly unprofitable. Most wise and safe therefore, is that holy maxim, "Gird up the loins of your mind;"—meaning, no doubt, that there must be a continual compression, and a driving back to its centre, of the force which wants to run out and spend itself in words and deeds; and in giving form and strength to a thousand evil things.

That is a remarkable Scriptural expression, "*we are in him that is true.*". Now, what is it to be in him that is true? Is it not to be led by the Spirit of Truth—the great "I AM?" Is it not to feel a certain *sureness*, quite distinct from our natural state of being? For, in our natural, unchecked, and undisciplined state, we can scarcely be said to BE. We are constantly tossing and turning from one phantom of imagination to another, and "nothing is, but what is not."

Who is there that sets himself to the task of steadily watching his thoughts for the space of one hour, with the view of preserving his mind in a

simple, humble, healthful condition, but will speedily discern in the multiform self-reflecting, self-admiring emotions, which, like locusts, are ready to "eat up every green thing in his land," a state as much opposed to simplicity and humility, as night is to day. This is our real state;—the state in which we live and walk as in a vain show, and with just as much natural instinct and ease as we draw our breath. And is this a state to be overlooked as a negation, in the estimate we take of our actual condition, and which may be tossed out of the calculation as in no way influencing it? And do we suppose that merely by *willing* to be good or great in thought or action, and choosing to take our moral possessions by a *coup de main*, the matter can be accomplished, and we can know the truth as it respects either ourselves, or others, or things in general, by placing them in the position that is most congenial to our taste and fancy?

Truth, like every other precious thing, must be paid for. Before therefore, we receive the high flights either of poets or philosophers respecting the nature of man, it is good to inquire whether they have taken the only way to understand it rightly, by first, as far as possible, understanding its intense corruption,—its inordinate vanity and selfishness, as revealed to them in the depths of their own souls,—and its poor, pitiable liability to awful inroads of evil from agencies of which it knows nothing.

"Have you sensibly experienced every day, per-

haps every hour," we are entitled to say to these glorifiers of their kind, "a pruning and excision of some sprout of self-will? Have the vain, and commonly worse than vain progeny of your natural thoughts, desires, and imaginations, been so severely cross-examined that you can say you have faithfully separated the precious from the vile, and left nothing standing in your interior building but what is honourable and true?"

To be sure, an acute observer, in one of his essays, remarks, that "it would be a sad thing indeed, if one's ideal was never to go beyond one's own infirmities;"*—and I suppose there may be some advantage on the side of taste and accomplishment, in cultivating a capacity for fancy work in this respect. I look upon it however, with respect to its utility, to occupy much the same place as silk and satin in a draper's shop. It is wanted for dress occasions; but for common wear and tear one looks for stouter and more enduring articles. Nor, let it be supposed, that these last are devoid of beauty. Everything is beautiful that is true; and everything is ugly that is false; and unsatisfactory as the affirmation may be, I think I should not be afraid to say, that every thoughtful, sincere person, who is, sufficiently well-informed and experienced to perceive and understand truth, will be ready to acknowledge, that those views of human nature which recognize it as chiefly under

* Companions of my Solitude, p. 168.

the influence of its own feebleness and corruption, and on that account, in need of being constantly directed to a humbling sense of its ignorance and danger, are far more likely to be safe and right views, than those which tend to exalt a creature whose intense vanity and self-love require a check, not to say a wound, at every turn.

On the whole then, one would be inclined to say to young persons, keep a watchful eye over yourselves on the side of your disposition to self-exaltation. I was struck with a verse of truth and wisdom, which I fell upon this very day. It occurs in the book of Ecclesiasticus. "O Lord, Father and God of my life, give me not a proud look, but turn away from thy servants always a haughty mind."* And though the counsel may seem cynical, I would further say to the young, be not very anxious about those enjoyments which result from the society of accomplished and intellectual persons. There is a subtle snare in everything that appeals to the mind on the side of its tendency to self-glorification, and its capacity for estimating talent; and we never think *less* of ourselves for being in association with gifted persons. Seek, and delight in that which meekens, rather than exalts your mind; for this is the thing to *wear well.* Silks and satins are holiday things.

* Ecclus. xxiii. 4. "A giant-like mind," is the rendering of the passage in the "Select Discourses" of Dr. John Smith.

CHAPTER III.

I FELT, while dressing this morning, a fretful, querulous influence upon my spirit, for which there was no apparent cause, and I said to myself, "I am in a very cranky sort of humour, I must take care what I am about to-day."

These evil influences, I strongly suspect, are from some conjunction in the planetary system with which we are mysteriously connected; and it did not appear to me at all absurd, when a phrenologist once told me, that whenever he felt them, he called for his astrological almanack, and usually found it all explained; "and then," said he, "I impose perfect silence upon myself for the rest of the day."

I remember that Madame Du Deffand in one of her letters observes, that "we must use address with ourselves, if we wish to avoid the most terrible sufferings;" and there is a great deal of wisdom in the idea, though with her, it only had the wisdom of this world for its origin. But even the wisdom

of this world discovers that there must be some sort of self-government established, or, like a runaway horse, the individual will speedily be out of breath, and in all probability come to serious hurt.

The sort of self-government which mere worldly prudence suggests, is seldom however, of the right sort, for it is obtained chiefly through the dominion of pride; that cruel task-master, who, like Pharaoh, orders his work to be done, be there proper materials or not, for doing it. It is by concealing, not by healing wounds, that this stern agent supports the soul; for, just as the Spartan boy having stolen a fox, hid it under his cloak, and suffered the beast to gnaw his very vitals rather than disclose the theft, so pride urges its votaries to endure being devoured by their interior evil, rather than succumb to the acknowledgment of its presence and power.

But to return to the subject with which I started, and to which, as a personal matter indeed, it would not be worth returning; but as from pretty long experience, it is one on which I fancy that I have a word of counsel to give, I may perhaps be pardoned for doing so.

I have observed that these strange attacks of gloom and restlessness, are suddenly and wonderfully alleviated by the interposition of any subject of pleasurable excitement; and for a long period of my life, I opposed them after the fashion in which unwise parents quiet a fractious child, by giving it

a cake or a new toy; that is to say, I went forth and bought something pretty or pleasant, or wrote a letter to, or made a call upon somebody or another; in short, I made an effort to produce a feeling of agreeable excitement in the place of the *ennui* that disturbed and dissatisfied me. It was really a great many years before I discovered that it was no accidental or trifling disturbance of the moral system which these attacks of restlessness indicated; but that they were the necessary and natural accompaniments of a lapsed spiritual condition, and that they existed in every human being, though modified, of course, by the strength or feebleness, and the subdued or indulged character of the will. Now my particular will, unhappily for myself, is a very strong one, and by the circumstances in which my lot was cast, it was, during my best years, a very undisciplined one.

I am quite aware, my dear reader, that it is barbarous taste to talk so much about myself; but bear with my vanity, for the sake of the little bit of good I hope to do you.

In regard to your bodily ailments, I make no doubt but you have felt how much more agreeable it was to lay them before your own medical friend, who is *sure* to have occasionally, just the same symptoms, and who will talk to you by the hour as to how they affect *him*, and how *he* combats with them, than to that strange, stiff, new doctor, who can spare no time to take the right measure of your ma-

ladies, but who dismisses both you and them as fast as he can, with a prescription, concerning which, nothing probably is so valuable as the fee you deposit for it. In like manner then, I persuade myself that you will wish to hear how *I* manage in the case of our mutual mental malady.

Well then, as soon as I had breakfasted, I informed myself that there would be no going to town to-day to buy either books or music, for that neither were wanted.

"But that beautiful little selection from Dr. Whichcote?—you would meet with counsel in *that* to suit these workings of evil."

"Should I not get as much help by acting against their influence, as by reading about how it is to be done?"

"Indeed, that's true;"—and then the clouded atmosphere of my spirit being broken by a soft, mild ray of benignant light, I sat still under its calming influence, and gradually got refreshed and strengthened.

The greater part of persons may be disposed to say, "well, and suppose you had dissipated your uncomfortable feelings by indulging yourself with the purchase of any little matter you had a fancy for, where would be the harm?" To which I reply, that it is not the mode in which this restlessness of nature acts that is of so much importance, as the thing itself. People that can afford it, may spend money no doubt, and heap together as many

new things as they like; and when there is no more interesting and important act to be performed, it is in this way I believe, that the appetite for excitement which springs from this disease of soul, obtains its daily food. But the disease itself is the dreadful thing, and that which is to be fought against; for if it cannot be dormant at any time,—if, when there be no apparent cause for its manifestation, it will still indicate its power by disturbing the mind with peevishness and dissatisfaction, and a covetous longing for this and the other novelty, *what* is it likely to be when potent sources of agitation are brought to bear upon it, and some of the great chances of human life are at stake? The ravening nature of self it is, which is the robber and destroyer of all good, and the author of all misery. Never suppose that it is to be pacified by indulgence, and that "*just this once*" will suffice to humour it. It has no other language than "Give, give;" and if you answer the cry to-day, assure yourself of being clamorously assailed with demands to do the same to-morrow. Cut the matter short with an unyielding No, and rely upon it, that your inner man will sweetly refresh you with a responsive "Yea,—Amen! even so, Father, if so it seemeth good in thy sight."

I admit that the being able to say No to one's self is an exceedingly difficult acquirement; but considering how often the exercise of it is wanted, scarcely any other seems of so much importance;

for in point of fact, I suppose the *not* being able to say it, is the fruitful source of more misery and misconduct than any thing else.

The great difficulty of life appears to be the art of sitting still. While there is anything to do, nature keeps up very well; but when things *are* done, and there is nothing for it but to be patient and quiet, and make the best or bear the worst, of every succeeding hour or half-hour, just as they come, with the same bald, monotonous insignificance in them, then it is that the selfishness and restlessness of poor fallen humanity is so painfully felt. Nothing, as it strikes me, more forcibly indicates our not being in our true and right condition, than this hungering after excitement, which no process of reasoning avails to subdue. One knows well enough that it is a wrong and false appetite, and that our duty is to be contented and at rest; but knowledge alone will not aid us in this case. There must be a certain process pursued, which, if I were to simplify and condense into a direct and intelligible meaning, I would call a calm attention to the present moment, and a respect, so to speak, for the small and uninteresting details which the present moment brings with it, together with a constant reference to the will of our Heavenly Father.

"I have set God always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved." This view of the presence, help, and approbation of the Divine Being, and this alone, gives a dignity and

purpose to every occupation, and does most unquestionably, so beautifully equalize the mind with a sense of truth, that while it operates, no weariness, no dissatisfaction, no restlessness can be experienced.

As soon as I felt disposed for reading, I took up Emerson's "Representative Men;" and falling upon this remark, "*Evil, according to old philosophy, is good in the making*,"—I felt revived and comforted in thinking that all the evils which oppressed me, may be, and I confidently believe are, the necessary working and fermenting of interior corruption, before the dregs settle down, and the good separates itself from them. There is no great effect in the natural world but seems to be accompanied by a preparatory work of strife and pain; and, beyond all question, vast conflicts must be endured before there is any regeneration in the moral one.

There is, as it strikes me, a wonderful chain of truth wrapt up in that passage of Scripture relative to Elijah. "And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still small voice;" a figurative mode of teaching, by which I learn that, before the soul can come under

the influence of the meekness of wisdom, there must be a work of slaying and subduing upon the fierce elements of the earthly, selfish, sensual nature. These once dispersed, the pure, gentle stirrings of the new-born, divine nature, have an opening made for their manifestation. But then we must remember that this work of preparation in the soul is done after the manner of storm, and tempest, and fire. The vanities and idols of the natural man must be torn up by the roots, and shaken to their foundation by the earthquake;—the chaffy imaginations must be consumed by fire; and, for the most part, we must be crushed, grieved, humiliated, and even terrified, by the war of our own wild elements of being, before we can be subdued into that state of passivity in which, not notionally, but sensibly and experimentally, we become as clay in the potter's hand.

It is of great importance I may here observe, so to order our habits of life as to inure ourselves to tediousness and monotony; for it is through all these influences so disagreeable to nature, that strength of mind and a capacity to endure, are formed. People can generally find patience for great and inevitable exigencies; for the mind, knowing in such cases that it has no choice, makes a virtue of necessity, and is quiet. But the difficult thing to bear, is sameness, and dryness, and those every day similarities which we call insipid, only because we do not know how to use them aright.

The company for instance, of uncongenial individuals;—what a common trial is this! If we had but so and so for our comrades in the journey of life we say, or even if we had nobody, so that we could but get rid of some one whose presence is uncongenial to us,—what very different, and what much more amiable people we should be! Our tempers would be better—our habits would be more courteous and agreeable—our lives in every respect, would be happier.

But this is a great fallacy. The influences that surround us in our childhood and earliest youth indeed, are likely to give the temper and feelings a right or wrong bias; but speculations as to what we should or should not have been, do not visit the mind till its character is formed; and when once this is done, be assured it matters but little where, and with whom, your lot is cast. Your moral being like your natural, has come to its full growth, and will be developed no further in that respect. I am far, however, from saying, that the society of uncongenial and froward people is not a great evil; still I am inclined to think, that where the previous training has been what it ought to be, this evil, will, as Emerson says, turn out to be "good in the making;"—inasmuch as it gives a trial and scope for the exercise of many precious qualities, which can only be elicited through the pressure of pain and contrariety.

Who is patient—who is humble—who is prayer-

ful—who is self-denying, if it be not the being whose natural craving for joy is perpetually blunted by adverse circumstances, and who, fretted and opposed at every effort he makes to satiate it outwardly, is driven to turn inward, and fall back upon the bosom of Him, who, in every sort of affliction only says with a more distinct and audible voice, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;—come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Ah *wherefore!* let every wounded heart reply!

I would also say, value greatly, and exercise as often as possible, *small* efforts of self-denial. "By little and little the mulberry leaf becomes satin;"—and no one can understand prior to experience, the amazing power of small efforts constantly and steadily repeated. Man would gallop, or, if possible, fly to the completion of his purposes. He would build Rome in a day, and scale the Alps in an hour. Babel, in short, has never ceased to have its artificers; neither has the Providence of God ever ceased to throw down every thing that such workmen raise, and to show them that what he will have to be raised and standing, is effected in quite another way,—and a way, moreover, totally inconceivable to the natural man, from the very minuteness, humility, and simplicity of its quiet gradations.

We may I believe, rely upon it, that it is not from reflection or study, or "heaping up to themselves teachers," that persons become the subjects of moral renovation; but from small endeavours, suggested by *small* internal monitions, about the *small* moment just before them.

I have such strong faith in the power that attends a habit of confining the attention to the present moment, that I should be disposed to make it the ground-work of every system of education. Have a work for every moment, and mind the moment's work. Surely, if some such principle as this were at the root of our teachings, it must be greatly helpful in delivering the mind from that visionary state of thinking wherein it is always making images, and building castles in the air, and being suffered to stray and run about as it likes, is sure to be taken captive by a troop of idle fancies that devour its noble capabilities, and reduce it to a dry and withered condition, in which it necessarily becomes brittle, and soon irritated, soon discomposed, and the victim of futile impatience with everything and everybody, oftentimes it does not know why.

Another great aid to the establishment of internal peace, is a strong and steady habit of resisting impulse; and it is one which will necessarily grow out of that other good one of minding the present moment's business, and having a business to mind. Impulsive people are, almost always, idle and va-

cant-minded; and it is curious to observe how instantaneously many of the working classes become impulsive when the necessity for labour is removed. There is more drunkenness and mischief on a Saturday night and Sunday, than on any other days of the week, in the lower orders of society, just because having nothing to do and no mental or moral culture to show them the danger of impulse, and point them to the duty of resisting it, they yield to that natural hunger for agreeable sensation, which, though exercised upon different objects, is the same thing in its nature, whether in prince or peasant; and which manifests itself from the cradle to the grave, in hasty jumps and jerks of fancy, to get, or to do something, which it is a thousand chances to one will produce us more or less of mischief and misery when it is got, or done.

"But, may we not sometimes be visited by a sudden impulse to do a good action?" it may be asked—and I will not say that we should be right in resisting a kindly prompting of any sort. But this I will say, that, for the most part, every thing that is to be good for any thing, must *grow;* and that when we act from impulse, even though it may seem to be a good impulse, there is generally a secret sense of crudeness and rawness in the deed. It seems to be plunged into existence before it is ripe; and is very seldom unaccompanied by after-regret for not having waited a little longer for its maturing. You may always indeed suspect error

when you are in a hurry to act; for, wherever there is eagerness to follow a sudden suggestion, there is more than a probability of making mistakes. Scarcely any thing that is needful or proper to be done requires any haste in the performance of it, because haste always betokens some degree of insufficiency. We shall almost invariably find, in reviewing our past experience, that those actions which we have discovered to be wrong and painful in their consequences,—everything, in short, in our moral history of which we have cause to say, "*would that it had not happened!*" have been the result of our having *rushed* rather than entered into them, and which we consequently undertook in a hasty, inconsiderate, and confused manner. There may, certainly, be cases in which a strong assurance of being in the right, and a fear of irresolution in adhering to it, will urge us to great promptitude in action. But even here, the right thing will be more rightly done under a process of patience in waiting for the right time.

Wait!—Wait!—Ah, those two words, what salvation is in them! You can never do better than *act them out* at least *once* every hour. Observe also, how hasty impulses subside of themselves, if not shaken and jarred into sustained vibrations by the furious will; and you will soon perceive the inestimable value of being still and motionless as death, under their first concussions.

There are a few words at the close of the 4th

chapter of Proverbs, which comprise inexhaustible truths—I select a few of them.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." By which precept I conceive myself directed to let my *inward* eye be steadily fixed upon the immediate moment before me, which is my only concern, because it is my only reality.

"Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." Watch your way then dear friend, as a cautious traveller; and don't be gazing at that mountain or river in the distance, and saying "how shall I ever get over them?" but keep to the present *little inch* that is before you, and accomplish *that* in the little moment that belongs to it. The mountain and the river can only be passed in the same way; and when you come to them you will come to the light and strength that belong to them.

The task is difficult and perpetual, but we do not engage in it unaided; for "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding;" and the chief business of a wise man's life, is to aim at distinguishing this divine inspiration in the depths of his own soul. It is very near to us, and the more humbly, and quietly, and constantly we wait upon it, the more distinctly it manifests its own light and our darkness. It is

to be perceived, more commonly, in a way of restraint than of propulsion; the will requiring rather to be checked than stimulated, because "the way of man is froward and strange," and totally different from God's way. This holy Guide must therefore be sought in the way of the cross; that is, in the way that crosses and opposes the sudden, eccentric, and vehement way of the creature. "The preparation of the heart in man, is of the Lord;"—and all that calms, silences, and meekens it, is a part (and a great part too) of that divine preparation.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I consider the praiseworthy efforts that many good people are making for the benefit of their fellow creatures, and especially when I am asked to participate in their exertions, I am always sorry to stand aloof from the work; but there is a secret consciousness in my mind of the futility, not to say folly, of some of these virtuous doings, which would render it a labour of deceit instead of benevolence, were I to unite in them.

The purposes and projects of the "Peace Society" are of this kind. In vain would I try to persuade myself that so obviously right a thing as the abolition of war, ought to be advocated and laboured for, with earnest and unintermitting zeal. It does not admit of a question that war is a very dreadful evil. But I cannot divest myself of a feeling, that to hope, and expect, and work for its abolition as a practicable thing, is about as reasonable a matter as to long and labour for the abolition of evil altogether. For what is war, but one of the branches

and sprouts in which the root of evil manifests itself? and until you can eradicate the root, in vain will you attempt to lop off the branches. Besides, the question involves in it the subject of self-defence; which, after all the demonstrations that can be made about it from pen or platform, will, from the force of instinct, prompt people to act naturally and necessarily in the way of warfare against whatever dangerously assails them.

Just fancy the case of a foreign invasion (Heaven send it may never be more than fancy!), and our lives in jeopardy as we sat by our firesides! Can we believe that the most zealous advocates or the most active labourers in the Peace question, would, at that time, and under those circumstances, be disposed to act out their principles, and, as Sir Robert Peel once said, "stand with their arms folded, and quietly wait to have their throats cut," rather than make use of any weapons to defend themselves? Their quietness on such an occasion, I am inclined to think, would greatly depend on their being satisfied that a stout troop of soldiers was near at hand to protect them.

I have often wished, when I have seen such an outlay of good will and good feeling lavished upon purposes that do not seem to touch us as individuals, that these excellent people could hit upon some project for the moral advancement of their species, that had a guarantee of success in its nature; and in which, there could be no excuse for

not joining heart and hand in helping them. But it strikes me that there wants something practical, —something real,—something that may be used as a principle for every day wear and tear, in their objects. For instance—there is a general spirit of goodness and virtue in the following "Pledge of the League of Universal Brotherhood;" but of what daily, sterling use is it to the taker of it, as a *practical* principle?

"Believing all war to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and destructive of the best interests of mankind, I do hereby pledge myself never to enlist, or enter into any army or navy, or to yield any *voluntary* support or sanction to the preparation for, or prosecution of, any war, by whomsoever, or for whatsoever proposed, declared, or waged. And I do hereby associate myself with all persons of whatever country, condition, or colour, who have signed, or shall hereafter sign, this pledge, in a League of Universal Brotherhood; whose object shall be to employ all legitimate and moral means for the abolition of all war, and all the spirit, and all the manifestations of war throughout the world; for the abolition of all restrictions upon international correspondence and friendly intercourse, and of whatever else tends to make enemies of nations, or prevents their fusion into one peaceful brotherhood;—for the abolition of all institutions and customs which do not recognize and respect the image of God, and a human brother in every man, of whatever clime, colour, or condition of humanity."*

Now let us suppose, that instead of this pledge *not* to do what we may never be asked to do, and

* "Bond of Brotherhood,"—conducted by Elihu Burritt, No. 15, for Oct. 1851.

which relates to contingencies of comparatively rare occurrence, a league of brotherhood were formed for the promotion of Truth and Probity, and a pledge to some such effect as this were offered for the signature of all who desired to belong to it?

"Believing all falsehood to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and destructive of the best interests of mankind, I do hereby pledge myself never wilfully and deliberately to give utterance to a conscious lie, or to yield to any selfish desire of promoting my worldly interest by the practice of any sort of dishonesty. And I do hereby associate myself with all persons of whatever country, condition or colour, who have signed, or shall hereafter sign this pledge, in a League of Universal Truth and Probity; whose object shall be, by personal example and advice, to lift up a testimony against all falsehood and fraud, whether in commercial dealings, or those which occur in the private and social relations of individuals."

This suggestion to take a pledge to speak the truth, I once ventured to make in an article that I inserted in a monthly periodical belonging to a small and peculiar religious sect, not anticipating the hubbub that I was about to raise. Several persons were quite angry; and one individual answered it very fiercely in the same publication. I ought to state that my remarks on that occasion, did not relate to the Peace Society, but to the Teetotal, for which I have much more respect as being more practical, and, as far as it is operative, certainly of great value; and I think now, that I was

wrong in approaching it with any other sentiments than those of cordial sympathy and approbation.

Still, it was not what I said respecting Tee-totalism, that gave half the offence which the suggestion about signing a truth pledge excited. "It was quite foreign to the purpose,"—some said;—"Irrelevant and futile,"—others;—"Childish and inconsequent," &c. &c. In short, I do not know if I had deliberately devised something to disturb and exasperate mankind, how I could have succeeded better.

There is something curious, but at the same time painful in observing the general resistance of human nature to any close dealing with truth. It is the rarest thing in the world to meet with those who love it,—or who love the people that love it;—though there is something in every heart that involuntarily recognizes and approves of its exhibitions when they do not come too close;—when they do, everybody gets out of the way, as they would from an exploding firework.

This general distaste to truth as a personal, practical thing, arises, I suppose, from an unwillingness to go into the depth of the heart, and bring up from thence its realities;—a reluctance which is natural enough, when we cannot but be conscious how very painful, and how very humiliating, some of those realities, would prove; and hence, it is easier to undertake almost any act of virtue rather than that which calls upon us to examine and to prove our own selves.

It is on this account probably, that we have such a multitude of associations for a variety of good works, which keep us on the outside of ourselves (so to speak), and which I do not say are otherwise than praiseworthy and beneficial in their proper place,—but to which we ought not to give the first place, for the first place in all righteous acts is due to individual, and moral improvement. "*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*" Now, no persons can be called converted, or can be in a condition to do any real moral good to others, who are not, as far as the frailty of humanity permits, truthful, honest persons. It will be said, probably, "and how do you know, and why do you presume to suppose, that the individuals who are the associated promoters of the public good, are otherwise than truthful and honest?"

I might reply to this, by quoting a striking Spanish proverb which says, "*the Canon is good, but the Chapter is naughty,*" and remark, that, although an individual, here and there, may be sincere, upright, and on the whole, to be called good, yet you will scarcely find any corporate body upon the face of the earth, in which corruption does not preponderate, and keep down whatever is sincere and upright within it. But, as I take this proverb to allude to associated bodies of quite a different nature from the Peace Society, I readily acknowledge that I neither know, nor suppose the members of that corporate body, to be any other than

strictly truthful and honest in their word and dealings;—but this I know, and everybody who puts forth a finger in the cause of truth, *as* truth, may know the same,—that there is in human nature a conscious shrinking from it, which I believe to be not only one of the greatest faults, but the cause also, of the greatest faults of every human being.

It is quite curious how this fact (for it is a fact reader, you may depend upon it) operates in the affairs of life, and how the consciousness of its existence is manifested at every turn. Many circumstances in my own experience have shown me this, but none, I think, with more annoyance, not to say disgust, than some which attended my writing an occasional article in a certain popular periodical. Whenever the witness *within*, told me that what I had written was honest, faithful, and applicable to the conscience of those I addressed, I scarcely remember one instance in which the article was not returned to me; and I had to perceive, that, just in proportion as I had satisfied myself in this respect, I had dissatisfied the Editor; and I also found, that if he did accept my contribution, he almost always expunged from it the sentence, or sentiment, on which I had depended for making the strongest impression. At length I was told, in so many words, that the question was not whether my contribution was clever or good, but, whether it was suitable for the periodical. So when it came to this, and I found that when I sat down to write, I

was not to let my thoughts and feelings flow naturally, or follow out any subject that was fitted to appeal to the deep moral feelings of the reader, and so to present this or the other view of matters, as a lengthened and varied experience together with the exercise of those natural gifts which the goodness of God might, perhaps, have bestowed upon me, would suggest;—but I must be perpetually putting to myself the King's question in Hamlet, "*An't sure there's no offence in't?*" and turn and twist things so as that they should look agreeable, and give no unpleasant jar to anybody's feelings;—when the matter was thus simplified, I said to myself, "have nothing more to say to it, but be thankful to God that you are not driven to earn your bread by literary exertions, seeing, that to be generally acceptable, they can only be made in one way and after one pattern, and that the pattern which has the least of truth in it."

"And who are you," somebody or another will here inquire, "who take upon yourself to set up for being better than other people, and who claim an exemption from their liabilities to fall into temptation?"

I am a very frail creature, dear reader, and in most respects, one who ought to be amongst the last to set up for a teacher of any thing;—but it has pleased the wisdom and goodness of God, who makes our own mistakes and miseries to be our most efficient schoolmasters, to impress me long,

and deeply with a conviction that the knowledge and possession of truth is all that a rational and responsible being has to seek for.

"And do you suppose that other people besides yourself have not the same conviction?" I shall be asked, as I have been a thousand times before.

And then I shall reply, "Of course they have," as I have replied a thousand times;—and then I shall say to myself as I have also done *many* thousand times,—"but I don't know where these people live. I know only, that whether I be right or wrong,—whether it be the morbidness of my own mind or not,—whatever in short, be the cause,—I can get nobody to agree with me when I think and say, as I believe I shall go on to think and say to the end of the chapter, that nothing seems to me to be so rife, nothing so acceptable, nothing so much cherished, though perhaps in many cases unconsciously,—as lying vanities;—and that, for the most part, there is nothing of which people are so willingly ignorant, as truth.

They may be constrained by the force of circumstances, now and then perhaps, to deal with it;—but they take hold of it just as they would take hold of a nettle. They *patter patter* about the surface, and sting themselves with the little paltry details of this and that, and how this and that will affect their small personal interests; whereas, if they were to grasp it as a *whole*, they would escape uninjured.

But it is time that I should put an end to this dissertation, for which I anticipate that I shall get a trimming. The critic who read me a homily respecting a former work of mine, and reproved me for "*keeping all the good in it so tenaciously for myself*," and who "*hoped when he met me again, to find my wisdom less self-centred*," *—will think I have little benefited by his rebuke.

But this is not exactly the case. On the contrary, I am quite conscious (and by this particular observation of the Reviewer the consciousness is deepened) that I am by nature and habit, and the unfortunate circumstance of living in a condition which meets with little opposition from the collision of other minds and wills, too prone to state my sentiments in the imperative mood;—which should not be, and I am sorry for it. But it seems to me, that in all writing, and talking, and preaching, and every thing else that appeals to that part of our nature which is supposed to understand and approve of truth, it is not the manner, but the matter, that is the question. To be sure, the advocates of truth should not, by any means be fierce or angry; for to be in the right, and at the same time to be angry, is like enveloping the form of the Medicean Venus in the skin of the tiger.

Truth, though an absolute, is at the same time an

* Review of "Visiting my Relations" in the Gentleman's Magazine for Jan. 1832.

exceedingly meek and modest thing, and withdraws from all hasty and denunciatory ways of bringing out its results. It radiates its still and perfect beauty like the dawn of day, silently and gradually; and it is necessary to remember this, when, in the strength of nature's fire, and a mighty idea of setting people to rights, we are for seizing hold of this gentle guide and endeavouring to make it carry our blazing torch instead of its own soft illumination.

It is indeed quite wonderful, and as humiliating as it is wonderful, to observe, that however justly persons may think upon, and however ardently they may seek truth in the abstract, yet in many of the circumstances of life, they may act as though they did not know wrong from right. The fact is that there is something as widely different between the reading and approving of truth as set before us in a book, and the practical application of it in the circumstances of life, as there is in beholding and admiring in a picture the representation of a ship in a storm, and being ourselves in a vessel that was actually so situated.

This disproportion between our best conceptions and our practice, is extremely humiliating, but it ought not to disturb our conviction of what is morally true; for that must ever remain as inflexible as the results of the multiplication table; and a vast matter it is, to establish this belief of the infallibility of moral truths, as an ever-present, ever-

operative principle. To have it fixed upon our minds for instance, with just as much faith in its unerring consequences as that two and two make four—that a lie, or any deceitful, dishonest practice, will, sooner or later bring us to loss, and that it must do so in the nature of things ;—that all undue self-indulgence, all harsh and injurious conduct towards others, all treachery, and every act or thought that puts us to shame, and which we should be ashamed of making known, have as surely their natural and necessary consequence of chastisement wrapt up in them, as the seed of corn has the future wheat hid in its bosom,—what a useful piece of moral arithmetic would this prove ! In regard to the particular subject of self-control, it is quite striking, and deeply instructive to observe, that the merest worldling, and even the most depraved of human kind, are sensible of the necessity of *some* restraining influence upon their will, and as necessity prompts, they learn how to acquire and use it; just as the poor and illiterate get a way of their own of casting up their accounts, and of knowing how to keep themselves from being cheated. But in both cases, their ignorance of the absoluteness and simplicity of any rule, occasions the work to be one of great difficulty and confusion.

Now how does a man grow rich? Not by avoiding to run into lavish indulgences and a large outlay to support them ; but by watching carefully against small and unnecessary expenses, which he

knows well enough, form the canker that eats away the core of his substance. Even so, how does a man grow wise? Not by poring over stores of books, or spoiling good quires of paper in writing them; but by taking note of the little words, and little thoughts, and little feelings, and little actions, that occupy his daily and hourly life; and which, small as they are, make him just what he is—a wise man, or a fool.

I perceive, in looking over what I have written, that I have got a great way from the Peace Society with which I started. I can only plead guilty to a sad habit of wandering in my discussions; which, as I am rather too old to correct, I must throw myself upon my reader's clemency to pardon.

CHAPTER V.

I DO not know anything that occasions to sensitive people more vexation, regret, humiliation, and innumerable other painful sensations, than a propensity which they almost always possess, to talk and lay open their hearts to everybody who is disposed to listen to them.

In Moore's Life of Lord Byron, this feature of his character is strikingly alluded to, as what the biographer calls "a susceptibility of immediate impressions." He then quotes the following passage from the Life of Tasso :—

"There are some persons of a sensibility so powerful, that whoever happens to be with them, is, at that moment to them the world. Their hearts involuntarily open,—they are prompted by a strong desire to please, and they thus make confidants of their sentiments, people whom in reality they regard with indifference."

Of this statement, I only question their being prompted by "*a strong desire to please;*" for I

am afraid this incontinence of speech does not arise from any thing so amiable. I am rather inclined to consider its root to be vanity, which naturally produces egotism. Vain people are also, for the most part, extremely self-indulgent, and extremely unconcentrated, from the habit they have acquired of amusing themselves with acting dramas, wherein "I by myself, I," is, of course, the all-conquering hero.

And now my dear reader, don't begin to scold, and repeat the old query of who are you? and so on; for, to let you into a secret ("no man" as a certain writer observes, "being so confidential as when he is addressing the whole world,"*) it is just because I am myself in a great degree a participator in, and have often been a sufferer from, this disposition to chatter and rush upon hasty confidences about myself and my affairs, that my thoughts have occasionally been exercised with an endeavour to trace it to its source; and though the result is far from complimentary or agreeable, I can only recognize it as proceeding from the subtle operations of vanity; the most secret and unsuspected, but at the same time, one of the busiest of our internal influences. It is one however, which of all others is the soonest mortified and silenced. You cannot easily wound a proud man, for it is next to impossible to put him to shame, and quite so, on this side

* Friends in Council, vol. 1, p. 47.

of his nature, inasmuch as he never lays himself open by any disclosures relative to his thoughts and feelings. But oh, *how* easy—how ridiculously easy is it to make a vain person appear poor and contemptible! more particularly when he unguardedly gives the reins to a strong propensity to talk about himself; and vain people seldom talk about any thing else. In fact they cannot. Their "susceptibility of immediate impressions," as Mr. Moore calls it, and to which definition might be added their indulged delight in exciting them, necessarily produce pain or pleasure; both of which sensations are personal things, and powerful things; and though not equally difficult to be borne in secrecy and silence, are both likely to be too much for the person whose natural vehemence of temperament has never been broken by early and somewhat sharp discipline. Such people cannot bear to be uncomfortable; and the propriety or necessity of being silent, *is* discomfort to them; so they run for present ease, or for present enjoyment, into the strangest statements, often to the strangest hearers; sometimes getting a needful rebuke before their disclosures are ended, by being compelled to perceive that the confidants they have chosen, are surprized and confused, rather than gratified by their communications.

Scarcely any kind of punishment can be sharper than this sort of wondering contempt from, perhaps, the contemptible. They are never so how-

ever, under these circumstances ; for the babbling indiscretion of which we are speaking, helps to lift them out of their natural inferiority ; inasmuch as it never fails to exalt the feeble, just in proportion as it depresses the strong. "Even a fool," says Solomon, "when he holdeth his peace is counted a man of understanding;" and the running into many words will frequently cause a superior person to prove the justice of the proverb, and show to great disadvantage by the side of some silent, pompous simpleton.

Scarcely any one repents of *not* having spoken ; and there is wonderful wisdom in these words of Mr. Carlyle*—"In all thy perplexities, do thou thyself but hold thy tongue for one day ; on the morrow, how much clearer are thy purposes and duties,—and how much rubbish have those two mute workmen, silence and concealment, swept away!"

I have been led into these thoughts at this particular juncture, because it happens to be the beginning of a new year ; and in looking back upon the many foolish things which I have said and done during the last, I promise myself to try and be wiser for the next.

How curious it is that we always seem to gather strength from beginnings! And how strong we are for a little while, till something of the old

* In his "Sartor Resartus."

leaven like a great blot of ink on a new writing book, mars the fair page of our good doings, and then there is a reaction and we are all in despair, and upon the point of not caring how many more blots are made. But this must not be. We must turn over a new leaf every day, and be always beginning,—always going on;—and when we fall, getting up again as fast as possible, and again going on. Madame Guyon says, "every thing depends on continual progress." This idea I feel as if I could never too deeply engrave on my own mind, which is constantly disposed to stop and inquire whereabouts it is in life's journey, and to look back on the road it has passed, and to lose time in thinking how much better it might have been travelled.

There is an inclination I believe in every mind to pause now and then and take a look at itself; just as a painter pauses to contemplate his picture and consider its progress. This may be very well in him, and favourable to his work; but it is not so with the mind. *There*, everything must be perpetually advancing; and to be looking back at the steps we have made, is to do as a child who takes a plant out of the ground *to see how it grows.*

I must stop a little longer however, with the reader's leave, on this subject of indiscreet communicativeness, and let out some of the effervescence of my thoughts respecting it on paper, as a kind of safety valve; or, possibly, on the same ground as Sir Richard Steele is said to have writte· his

"Christian Hero;" in order that his own hand might witness against him if he relapsed into any conduct inconsistent with the virtuous character he had pourtrayed in that book.

There is a beautiful dignity in certain minds, as distinct from the solemn coxcombry of pride, as the graceful symmetry and movements of a swan are different from the quack and waddle of a goose, which I quite reverence, and languish to possess. But it is the rarest thing to meet with. Plenty of pretenders to it I have often encountered; but the holders of the thing itself I do not remember to have seen above three or four times in my life.

Without any assumption, on the contrary from the very meekness of its bearing, it throws a protecting panoply over its possessor that effectually nullifies the obtrusive familiarity and pert censure with which people like Lord Byron are always prone to be assailed. For, whatever it is that inferior persons can *not* do, they are seldom deficient in a capacity to perceive, and peck at, the weaknesses of those who have more understanding than themselves; neither do they ever lack the power of remembering them with much more distinctness and tenacity, than any higher traits of character in their betters.

It is a saddening reflection indeed, but one that forces itself upon the minds of all who would see things as they are, that you may always calculate upon being observed and characterized rather by

your faults than by your merits; unless you should happen to be so insignificant, or so dissembling, as to be a favourite with everybody. This may sound rather sarcastic; but I will venture to challenge the reader quietly to consider the matter, and then say, should he number any universal favourites amongst his acquaintance, whether they are not properly, and on the whole, to be classed with the weak or with the hypocritical. *This* is perfectly certain; that they never can be frank, open-hearted persons;—never of the Othello sort, who "wear their hearts upon their sleeve, for daws to peck at;" —for if they were, the flock of daws and carrion crows who feed and grow fat upon the faults of such people, would not be lacking in their retinue. Not that I find any fault with the crows and daws for doing what is so natural to them, and so beneficial, rightly contemplated, to the subject of their attacks, who greatly require these practical lessons from the circumstances of life;—lessons which an old writer quaintly compares to those of "a wise father, who finding his son loitering and playing the truant with idle boys in the street, gives him a good smart slap and sends him home."*

There are few occasions in which this "smart slap" comes with greater force than when we discover the mistake we have made in supposing our-

* In a Sermon of W. Bridge, a Puritan Divine in the reign of Charles II.

selves to be interesting or important in any way, and, under that idea, are casting about for means of creating a sensation.

This desire of creating a sensation, exists perhaps, in greater strength in the female sex than the other; but it is a potent part of humanity in both. In the religious world it is disguised becomingly under the notion of anxiety about spiritual welfare. Nothing is more engaging and really interesting, than any evidence of sincere solicitude in young persons, or any persons, to know the way of truth and righteousness, and to acquire those elevated views and principles which are the only shield we can interpose between our temptations and our passions.

But really, as it seems to me, all right teaching and preaching does so distinctly turn the inquirer *away* from human help, and drive him so directly into the closet of the heart, there to "shut the door, and pray to his Father which seeth in secret,"—that when I have heard young people talk of consulting their "*dear minister*" about this and the other temptation, I have found it impossible to believe but that a lively desire of creating an interest for themselves in the heart of their spiritual adviser, was more actively prompting them, than a simple wish to do what is right; for, when *this* is the only motive, how near is the counsellor!

I can remember many occasions in my life in which I asked advice respecting measures that I

conceived myself called upon to adopt, and upon almost all such occasions, I have afterwards seen that I should have done better to have consulted only the oracle in my own breast. I can also remember that, whenever I did simply wait upon that oracle for light and direction, they not only came, but with them came also a holy confidence of being in the right, which was far more sure and unerring than any that my own or any other person's wisdom could have suggested. The more we accustom ourselves to obey this inward monitor, the more we shall be drawn away from all human counsel, and be taught to perceive that by seeking it we should only degrade and dishonour the divine Guide and Governor of our destiny.

We seldom I believe, are much bent upon seeking counsel when we only want to act for the best. It is when our motives are double, and particularly when we want to be comforted under dubious, and probably wrong conduct, that we seek such aid. Yet what consolation can be so futile as that which we derive from bolstering up doubtful things by another person's favourable view of them! How many times have I in my earlier years, tried to console myself for some imprudent step by talking it over with those who were likely to say something palliative of my indiscretion; or at all events to soothe and console me under the pain and remorse it occasioned; and how many times have I got nothing by such a step, but a deeper plunge into er-

ror and regret! For what can possibly be said to alter the nature of things? Truth must be truth, and error must be error, turn them which way you will; and in whatever point of view the doer of the wrong deed may choose to regard it, and by whatever process of coaxing and cajolery he may be persuaded to think he has not been so very foolish or so very wrong, the plain and unbending *nature* of the act as a right, or wrong, or wise, or foolish one, remains the same, and produces its natural and necessary impression upon all to whom it addresses itself.

But what then can we do in our various exigencies? The counsels or the comforts of others are, no doubt, but transient and unsatisfying remedies; —yet what can we do single-handed? Shall we make a fight of it, and buffet our foes of sorrow, and remorse, and fear, by running out for consolation to this and the other "shadow of Egypt?" Shall we go to the theatres, or read the lucubrations of Punch, or call for strong drink, or commit any other folly of the same kind. Where is the sane man or woman who, in any case but their own, would not both see and say, that such remedies were helpless and hopeless; and that to be still and quiet, would infallibly tend a thousand fold more than any other alleviation, to produce peace to the suffering spirit? So entirely does common sense assimilate with the results of the most exalted piety.

But here again, I have got a great way from

home, and am playing truant; for which the reader will be giving me the "good smart slap" I deserve. I shall not be angry if he does, for I have had many such "slaps" in my time, and never without cause to perceive that I wanted them. There is indeed in the lot of every body, some snare, some delusion, from which they require to be awakened by a sharp stroke.

None, as it seems to me, is so common and so unsuspected a deception as that of over valuing ourselves, and of supposing that this and the other disclosure of our interior condition is graceful or interesting.

> "O wad some power the giftie gie us,
> To see oursels as others see us,
> It wad fra' mony a blunder free us,
> An' foolish notion."

For lack of this "seeing oursels as others see us," —what a painful, yet at the same time, what a grotesque exhibition does a genteel evening party often produce! Here we have young ladies "looking delightfully with all their might,"—and labouring so earnestly to be sweetly simple and natural, that one wonders they do not themselves perceive how distinctly the young gentlemen whom they are aiming to subdue, are discerning and smiling at the intensity of their efforts. The young gentlemen in the meanwhile, are no whit behindhand in *their* purposes of recommending themselves; only, that having in a manner, and comparatively speak-

ing, the game in their own hands, and no such concentration of interests at stake in the result as the other party,—they generally take it more easy, and being more easy, are almost always more natural. Then, amongst the old ladies and gentlemen, in proportion as "the susceptibility to immediate impressions" is strong or weak, there is the careless betraying, or the studious concealing, of the ruling passion; and as you happen yourself to be in the habit of doing one or the other, you either rattle out your remarks or your narrations with an indiscretion which you contemplate upon your pillow till you are half mad,—or you listen to somebody else who does it, till you are half asleep. In a word, you have only to go into society under certain of its semblances, to discover that, as I have just said, no benefit or blessing can be greater than to be delivered from the delusion of supposing ourselves to be interesting,—and that nobody sees more of us than we choose to disclose. Adam Smith in his "Theory of Moral Sentiments," by way of illustrating his remark respecting the necessity of unconsciousness of purpose to render action graceful, observes, that we may admire the movements of a person who is merely walking across a room; but, if we had reason to suppose that individual was studying to excite admiration, or supposing that he excited it,—our sentiments would be those of disgust instead of approbation.

But with respect to what I have said touching

society, I would desire to be understood as alluding to it only under the modification of its full dress and gala day appearances. In the undress and ease of genial intercourse, it stands high in my estimation as one of the influences which operate the most beneficially upon the mind and affections; for it is a singular and a painful thing, that many, perhaps I might almost say most persons, find more sympathy as to their taste and imagination and general mental powers, every where rather than in their own domestic circle; and hence it may be that so many hearts so readily open to the pleasing impression which attends the consciousness of being understood and valued, and that they become sometimes indiscreetly communicative.

That the interior nature should so often develop its worst features at home, I apprehend must arise from the familiarity which reigns there, and which, according to the old proverb, engenders contempt. Now, contempt is the death of all budding beauty, and were it not for the gleams of sunshine which radiate from the kindliness of society in its friendly aspects, many a young spirit of great promise would wither unknown and unmatured.

And how much is there in every one, that a particular combination of circumstances is fitted to develop, even to the surprise of the individual himself! A few words,—a smile,—will strike the heart which had indurated under the frost of neglect or contumely, and cause the waters to flow in a

stream that fertilizes and refreshes, and makes it put forth many pleasant flowers and fruits.

There is another advantage which nothing but refined and intellectual society affords, and that is, the polishing off of those angularities of selfishness which are so strikingly developed in uneducated people. It matters not what the intellectual power may be, nor what the genius, nor what the study; —there is a coarse, rough instinct to seize upon whatever may make for personal interest in the natural heart, which is only to be tamed and properly regulated by the interchange of that courteous communication which exists between well informed and well educated persons.

Assuredly I have no quarrel with society while thus contemplated. But when it is made up of people whom it is impossible to consider as otherwise than intolerably silly, affected, artificial, and unsatisfactory,—people whose whole existence is devoted in its strongest aspirations to making fine appearances, and whose most solemn enquiry at every turn is, "*What will Mrs. Grundy say?*" —yet before whom, one's vivacity of temperament is ever presenting one like a gudgeon to be caught and devoured,—I should find it hard to do otherwise than despise, if I did not perceive that it would be wiser to compassionate it.

"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."

and when I remember that if my own particular evil

does not work in fears of Mrs. Grundy, or in anxious desires to appear somebody in the eyes of the world, it nevertheless *does* work, and quite as offensively in the opinion of a great many,—I would lay my hand upon my mouth, and find no fault with anybody. There is cause indeed, for the deepest compassion in every heart towards every living soul; and the more blind, and ignorant, and indifferent to what is good and true, and alive and eager after what is foolish and false, people may be, the more should every right feeling person pity and seek to ameliorate their condition. "But then they don't want either your pity or your help." Very well; don't trouble them then with offering it; but be sure they are none the less pitiable for supposing themselves above commiseration. We must all suffer and die; and whatever make-believe we have been playing at, it will then be seen for what it is. Here then, we meet on common ground, and ground where Mrs. Grundy and appearances have very little influence. O, for the single eye that looks always at truth, and *over*looks the little bits and parcels of nonsense, and frailty, whether of our own or other people's, which lie between us and it!

CHAPTER VI.

THERE are times when the mind, like nature, seems to be surrounded by sunshine, serenity, and love. A calm, mild Sabbath day is much in unity with this interior condition; and it was a condition which, on a still and lovely Sunday morning, I not long since experienced.

A little volume lay near me, which I opened almost mechanically; and, as happens sometimes under such circumstances, it presented to me a passage which suggested a train of thought that filled my mind for the greater part of the day.

The passage itself was in one of Longfellow's poems, wherein he had been alluding to scenes of past enjoyment in the society of a beloved individual from whom he was then separated; and more particularly, to the delight he formerly experienced in accompanying her to church.

> "Here runs the highway to the town,
> There the green lane descends,

Through which I walked to church with thee,
O gentlest of my friends!
* * * * * * * * *

"Thy dress was like the lilies,
And thy heart as pure as they;
One of God's holy messengers,
Did walk with me that day.
* * * * * * * * *

"Through the closed blinds the golden sun
Poured in a dusty beam;
Like the celestial ladder seen
By Jacob in his dream.

"And ever and anon the wind
Sweet-scented with the hay,
Turn'd o'er the hymn-book's fluttering leaves,
That on the window lay.

"Long was the good man's sermon,
Yet it seemed not so to me;
For he spake of Ruth the beautiful,
And still I thought of thee.

"Long was the prayer he uttered,
Yet it seemed not so to me;
For in my heart I prayed with him,
And still I thought of thee."
* * * * * * * * *

The beauty and simple truth of the imagery,—the dusty beam from the golden sun,—the sweet scented breeze from the hay-field waving the leaves of the hymn-book as it lay in the window,—so vividly recalled to my mind bright summer suns that had been set for many a year, but which at these exquisite touches of the poet seemed to gleam forth

again and to disclose many a long buried vision of unsurpassable beauty, that I sighed as I laid down the book to yield myself for a little while to the enchantments of memory.

"Why should it be so?" at length I asked myself. "Why is there this perpetual blight upon all earthly joy and beauty?"

The inquiry suggested several others, which at length landed me upon an idea on which I love to expatiate long and largely.

It may appear strange, but it is an inexpressibly sweet thought to me that, in point of fact, there may be no reality in the things that appeal to the senses, and if so, that evil, like everything else, is only a shadow, though like all the other mysteries that surround us, it is real enough in the aid which, when properly used, it lends to our moral development.

I am aware that this idea of the non-existence of external things, has occupied many wiser and more learned heads than mine; but I have never studied any person's theory respecting it. In fact, I never can get on with any sort of metaphysical theory. The abstruseness of such subjects is in itself calculated to inspire dismay; and when it becomes clothed in the abstract terms, which, like a shorthand for private use, nobody clearly understands but the individual who adopts it,—it is nearly as unintelligible to me as an inscription on a Babylonish brick. It is only by the occasional words

which I have met with in a course of very desultory reading, that I know anything of the views or notions of others on this subject, and never have I met with such words, however "few and far between," which did not wake up something in my heart that gave a willing and ardent assent to them.

These lines of Coleridge were, for a long time, scarcely ever absent from my mind:—

> "Constantly believe thou, O my soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth;
> And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
> Shapes of a dream."—

Nor did I less rejoice in this extract from the "Life of Sir James Macintosh,"* who says in the journal he kept while in India,—

"I had a conversation yesterday with a young Bramin of no great learning, the son of the Pundit (or assessor of Hindu law) of my court. He told me that besides the myriads of Gods whom their creed admits, there was one whom they know only by the name of Brim, or the Great One, without form or limits, whom no created intellect could make any approach towards conceiving;—that in reality, there were no trees, no houses, no land, no sea, but all without, was Maia or illusion, the act of Brim; that whatever we saw or felt was only a dream, or, as he expressed it in his imperfect Eng-

* Vol. i. p. 258.

lish, thinking in one's sleep; and, that the re-union of the soul to Brim, from which it originally sprung, was the awakening from the long sleep of finite existence."

Of course, such spectral contemplations as these make some people very angry.

"The frivolous," says Emerson,* "make themselves merry with the Ideal Theory, as if its consequences were burlesque;—as if it affected the stability of Nature. The broker, the wheelwright, the carpenter, the toll-man, are much displeased at the intimation."

"But," he goes on to say, "whilst we acquiesce entirely in the permanence of natural laws, the question of the absolute existence of Nature still remains open.

"It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena; as of heat, water, azote—but to lead us to regard nature as a phenomenon, not a substance;—to attribute necessary existence to spirit;—to esteem nature as an accident and an effect."

"Nothing," says Wm. Law† (for whose doctrines I entertain the most reverential admiration,) "nothing lives throughout the universe but spirit."

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* In the charming chapter on Idealism in his "Essay on Nature."

† In his "Spirit of Love."

"No, nothing else," I mentally repeated; "though to be sure, these views could never be digested into any system, nor propounded in a way to commend them to anybody's belief or acceptance;" and then I remembered Sidney Smith's story in one of his Lectures on Philosophy, respecting the ancient idealist who stoutly maintained the negation of matter; but whose servants, without in the least disputing the truth of his theory, still made it a point to snatch hold of him, and safely lift him out of the way whenever he was in danger of being run over by any vehicles in the street.

"But if one can draw no practical advantage from the theory," I continued, "of what use is it?"

The use and beauty of it as it strikes me, is to elevate and prepare us for the forthcoming state of spirit into which, on quitting the body, we manifestly pass, unless it be denied that we pass into any thing but sleep; a view of the subject which I do not receive; for, that we then do pass into the real, and *only* real region of truth, and love, and beauty, leaving our old mass of matter and mortality, our old world, and old bodies, and old dreams, behind us, and cast from us, just as the chrysalis casts off its skin,—I believe with the most devout hope and joy.

If there is one view of the mysteries of nature that saddens and afflicts my feelings with the most entire despondency, it is that of materialism. I can only conceive of matter as something symbolic of

corruption,—something that has got away from God; and I can only conceive of spirit, as something that is in unity with God. Is it not remarkable that every sort of evil temptation that comes to us, comes in some connection, however apparently remote, with things of sense, and related to matter; and that every release from temptation, every advance towards truth and goodness, comes with a demand, and with help, to release ourselves from the fetters of sense and materialism?

It is totally impossible for a materialist to be a spiritually-minded person. It is a contradiction in terms, and I am sure it is a contradiction in nature. His spirituality, if any he has, can only exist on the side of his pride;—and pride, envy, deceit, ambition, &c. which look like spiritual vices, and which, considered as such, may seem to nullify my views of the absoluteness of the connection between matter and sin,—will, I believe, when analyzed as to their nature, be found to assail and prevail upon human beings in some relation with matter and sense; and that without such relation they would be powerless to affect us.

One loses somewhat certainly, as to enjoyment, though I think it might better be said as to illusion, in being deeply imbued with these ideas respecting the spectral nature of matter. It also depreciates the towering claims of science when one is persuaded that they relate only to appearances. Nothing I confess, seems to me much more vapid and

uninfluential, as far as one's moral being is concerned, than the prodigious work that is made about any thing that addresses itself chiefly to the senses. —Lord Rosse's telescope for instance; I should delight in looking through it, for nothing charms my sensitive nature more than that great mystery, the starry heavens; and reverently I wonder at, and admire these glorious works. But, when it comes to the investing of them with spiritual attributes, and there is a talk of our hereafter, perhaps, inhabiting some one of the planets, and people are more than ever (as is natural enough with such a prospect before them) wanting to look through Lord Rosse's telescope, my sympathy ends; and I say to myself—"Pooh! what matters Lord Rosse's telescope, and what is the geography of the moon to me, or any one else, except as it may be needful to our present purposes to know something of its motions? At present, indeed, we are in the land of moonshine; (Heaven help us out of it!) but, when 'the day breaks, and the shadows disappear,' and we are in the land where 'there is no need of sun or moon,' there will be no masses of matter,—nothing hard or sharp, or rough or smooth, or near or distant, but we shall be in unity with the Great Unity, and see all truth at one glance, *in Him.*"

The great difficulty in all these speculations, is, so to clear our ideas, that we can distinctly specify them in language. So few people attach the same meaning to the same terms, that however intelligible

a proposition may be to the person who states it, there is but a forlorn hope that it will commend itself with any perceptible meaning to another. I saw this, not for the first time, but with new force, whilst pursuing my train of thought on this occasion.

"What a confused, and probably, mistaken notion," thought I, "do we imbibe from the word matter! In the popular acceptation of the term, it suggests merely a mass of something;—a great building, a great ship, a great tree, articles of furniture, &c. That is an oak table," said I, proceeding in my train of reasoning as one of the populace, *not* as a philosopher; "and a large, ponderable, space-occupying thing it is. But the wood of which it is made was once an acorn; and the acorn itself was once a seed; and this house in which I live was built brick by brick; which bricks were made of clay," &c. In short, I so satisfactorily to myself traced things to their beginnings, that my confidence in the theory of appearances was greatly strengthened; though, as in all such inquiries, nothing was so strictly demonstrated as the inflexibility of the barrier which prescribes a limit to them, and the impossibility of talking about them so as to be understood.

"What indeed is known of matter?" says a writer, in whose pages, I remembered a short time before, to have seen this mysterious question touched upon.

" We say that matter occupies space, possesses impenetrability, gravity, chemical attraction, adhesion, &c. But, when we proceed to ask what is that to which these properties are attached or belong, considered apart, or abstracted from, these properties ;—Is there a substratum possessing the essential properties of matter ? If so, what is the definition of this substratum ? Or again ; Is matter a congeries of atoms to which belong certain properties, and which are indefinitely small ? Or, is it a congeries of mere mathematical points, from which, as centres, certain attractions and repulsions act to certain distances ? Is not gravitation an attraction ? Is not cohesion,—is not affinity, an attraction ? Is not impenetrability, or the power of occupying space to the exclusion of another portion of matter—is not indestructibility, also a repulsion ? Is not magnetism—is not electricity made up of attractions and repulsions ? What then remains ? "

It is for the sake of telling the reader what the author deduces as a remainder that I have given him this long extract.

" What then remains ? If the presence of all these forces acting from central points would produce on our senses all the effect produced by matter ; may not matter, or rather may not the properties of matter which alone we know, be simply the result of forces thus grouped ? "*

* " Letters on Animal Magnetism," by Professor Gregory, p. 56.

I confess this remainder is very delightful to me; inasmuch as it seems to throw a gleam of illumination upon the dark, shapeless, and appalling mysteries of nature; wherein, except as faith and devotional feeling support the soul, nothing seems so palpably distinct as confusion and interrupted purposes.

"The sensible world," says Kant, "does not promise us, *from the nature of things*, a systematic unity of ends."

How true and comprehensive are those words, "*from the nature of things!*" and how powerfully do they draw the thoughtful reader to shut his eyes for a time upon the illusions of the senses, and meditate upon the intrinsic meaning and ascertained character of things!

"We can only know these things through the medium of the senses," it will doubtless be observed.

Of course, our perceptions of objects must be obtained in that way. A musician must have his instrument before he can demonstrate his art. It is a necessary condition of his doing anything. Still, it is *but* the instrument. Those fine modulations, those tender touches of beauty which extract from us a smile of rapture—where do they come from? Out of the instrument, no doubt, in a certain sense. But ask some boarding-school Miss trained in the school of Jullien and the like, to sit down to the same instrument, and what does she

do with it? Just as little and much the same as the person who deduces his views of spirit from the region of matter.

It is only the thinker upon truth and the lover of it, who either can or will, sincerely ask himself what is the nature of things, and if it does promise any thing like unity and truth.

When such a one contemplates the question abstracted from the light which revelation throws upon it, I conceive it impossible for him to come to any other conclusion than that his dwelling in this world is under a combination of circumstances which clearly indicate, *from their very nature*, an incapability of unity or truth.

For what is human life?—by which query I mean,—what is the life that by far the greater part of human beings are leading? so great a part, that they may well be quoted as the rule, and the very few who do otherwise as the exception.

Is it not the natural life of the senses? and is that life any thing and can it be any thing, but, as a powerful teacher of truth defines it, "the most intricate, irregular, and confused thing in the world; no one part of it agreeing with another, because the whole is not firmly knit together by the power of some ultimate end and object running through all."*

* Dr. John Smith, in one of his sermons, published in the seventeenth century.

Here we are told that from the very nature of this life there can be no unity of purpose in it, because it has no "ultimate end and object running through it."

But is there really none?

Yes, in a certain sense there is; for the ultimate end and object of such a life is ease and enjoyment —and where are these to be found?

Take up a newspaper, and you shall see. Take it up reverently, for it is a record of human nature, a map of its country, a guide to its resting places, a register of its joys and sorrows, its purposes and pursuits, and in every sense of the word, the most striking and veritable history of its ends and objects that language can unfold.

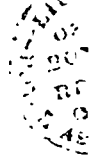
And what are they? Theatres, balls, plays, concerts, soirées, and what not in the way of pleasure. Disease, accident, misconduct, distress, and death in the way of suffering. Here is M. Robin, and his games fantastique in one column; and here in another, is a notice from a broken-hearted father, informing the world that—

"Left his home on Saturday last, a youth about fifteen years of age, supposed to take the road to ——. If he will return to his disconsolate parents, he shall be received with joy and forgiveness, and all his wishes as far as possible complied with."

Here is recorded an untimely birth;—and a little lower down, the mother's death.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair!

"The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings for the dead;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
Will not be comforted!"*



Here is a narrative of shipwreck or of railway destruction, sweeping away human life as if it were nothing but a leaf before the wind. Here you have a detail of bankruptcy, of crime, of sin, sorrow and shame, of everything in short, that indicates disorder, delusion, and untruth.

"But away with these too sombre views," perhaps, most persons will say; while those who delight in "rose water," as Mr. Carlyle expresses it, will impatiently shut my book, if they are not tempted to throw it into the fire.

I say no more then, except that the secret persuasion on my spirit that in walking amidst these scenes, we do, as holy writ expresses it, "walk in a vain show,† and disquiet ourselves in vain," is a theory which affords so potent a panacea for pain either of mind or body, that I should wrestle hard to maintain possession of it in the face of all the artillery that could be levelled against it.

That it would be attacked I make no doubt, if I

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* Longfellow. † Marginal reading "an image."

were not, as I hope and believe I am, too obscure and insignificant to serve as a target for any body's arrows; for I cannot but be well aware that I have selected dangerous ground for an untrained, unlearned person such as I am, to venture upon; and may reasonably apprehend that if I am discovered there by a scholastic philosopher, I shall not only get the "good smart slap," but be in hazard of having all my bones broken into the bargain. For when these scholars *do* catch a vagrant thinker upon their domains,—one who *only* thinks, and who does not know how to dispose of his thoughts after the rule and square of severe logic,—what minced meat they make of him! An infuriated game-keeper, and a detected poacher, convey but faint images of the attack. Nevertheless, people *will* poach, and they will *think*, be the hazard what it may; and, as the game in one instance, though irregularly obtained, may be quite as good in the eating as if the squire had shot it himself, so, a poor solitary unlearned body, humbly thinking about this and that, respecting the wonders that surround him, *may* pounce upon a truth which will feed him as deliciously when cooked in his own simple way, as if it had been garnished with the sharpest sauce with which Oxford or Cambridge could dress it.

To drop however, the metaphorical, and with it all pertness or presumption, I would quietly suggest to the opposers of these views, that there are

thoughts about things, which, from their very nature, cannot be made the subject of any process of ratiocination, but which are nevertheless, permitted to the lover of truth to indulge and delight in; and that whilst they are pursued with humility (a temper of mind which, more than any other, I reverently desire the Giver of all good to clothe me with)—they are tolerably certain of being eventually righted, by an internal evidence either of their futility or their justice. For, "whom will he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." *

There seems to be nothing therefore wanting to the attainment of the most sublime discoveries, but that precious nature of the little child to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to unfold the riches of his kingdom. May it be the disposition of his poor ignorant creatures to seek above all seeking, the condition which He favours!

* Isaiah xxviii. 9.

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS struck last night with this passage in an article in the Edinburgh Review, wherein the writer was speaking of the wonderful uniformity of certain operations in statistics.

"The first of these," he says, "is the exceeding regularity which is found to prevail in the annual march of statistical returns, and the constancy of the ratios they indicate where great masses of population are concerned. As instances might be cited, the relative proportion in the births of the sexes, &c.; the ratio of marriages to the whole population; of second marriages to the whole number of annual marriages; and, still more minutely, of widowers with widows, widows with bachelors, and widowers with spinsters; the relative ages of parties intermarrying, and innumerable other particulars, all of which, free as air in individual cases, seem to be regulated with a precision where masses are concerned, clearly proving the existence of relations among the acting causes so determinate,

that there is evidently nothing but the intricacy of their mode of action, to prevent their being subjected to exact calculation, and tested by appeal to fact."

When I had read this, I paused to muse a little upon it, and soon came to the conclusion that if things are really thus, it is clear that some mysterious law overrules human destiny, and compels it to be exactly what it is. In fact I saw nothing for it but the doctrine of fatality; and had no kind of objection to it. On resuming my book, I found that the Reviewer had also been impelled to the same conclusion, for the next sentence I read was as follows:—

"Taken in the mass, and in reference both to the physical and moral laws of his existence, the boasted freedom of man disappears; and hardly an action of his life can be named which usages, conventions, and the stern necessities of his being, do not appear to enjoin on him as inevitable, rather than to leave him to the free determination of his choice."

There is something very strengthening and consolatory to my mind in the idea that all things are ordained to be such as we find them to be; nor do I perceive that this doctrine of necessity has the slightest tendency, properly received and acted upon, to render persons careless or indifferent to their duty; inasmuch as there is an obvious necessity in the nature of things, that if they wilfully and consciously sin, they must suffer.

We may believe, therefore, that the dictates of common sense without any higher motive, would incline them to avoid evil doing as much as possible; whilst the comfort of the doctrine consists in the assurance it imparts that the things which give us pain, and which, judging by the event, it would have been wiser and better for us, so far as we supposed we had the power, to have ordered otherwise, really could not have been prevented; inasmuch as we *have* no power to alter any thing, but must take it as it comes in its inflexible order.

The usual objection that such views might possibly cause a person to say on committing any crime that it was his fate to do so, and he could not help it, seems to me but futile; for every person has *that* in him which testifies that it is his duty to observe the law of right written in his conscience, and that when he does observe it, he cannot find himself in any position that induces crime, though he may often be in a position to be comforted in believing that by no efforts of his own could he have avoided those circumstances which bring him under the discipline of pain and sorrow.

We want something inflexible,—something that can be recognised under the form of a law, to govern and to quiet the mind under its various exigencies whether of "mind, body, or estate;" seeing, that to its actual trials, it is ever prone to add the operations of imagination, and to enter on the "never ending still beginning" task of speculating on the cause and consequences of its sorrows.

"Had I *not* done so or so,"—or, "had I *but* done it,"—or, "if I *should* do it,"—who is there that does not know the nucleus of anguish which these fruitless cogitations cause in the centre of the heart, and to which every other thought gathers by irresistible attraction, till the poor subject of this mass of misery is well nigh distracted. How potent a stay at such times is the remembrance that there is a "needs be" for suffering; in using which expression, I would eschew very earnestly the language of religious conventionalism, which so often uses the phraseology of holy writ, without any distinct or practical knowledge of the thing it embodies, that to avoid joining in the desecration they have thus received, one would prefer to state one's meaning in almost any terms rather than in certain scripture expressions. I do not think it is going too far to say that more persons are repelled from religion by the flippant and odious familiarity with which certain sectarians garnish their discourse with biblical language, than by any other impediment.

There is a "needs be," I doubt not, in the sense of a divine necessity, that we should be "sometimes in heaviness through manifold temptations;" and our surest and readiest help at such times, will be found in a deep conviction that the incidents of human life as they arise, are only the unfoldings of a map,—only the revelation of a system of things that have been done in the counsels of God from

all eternity. In this belief we are brought "to the haven where we would be," and feel our souls, as George Fox says, "anchored to their immortal bishop," in a condition of security where the surgings of evil, however they may toss, can never overwhelm us.

There is another view of the doctrine of necessity which, though not directly, perhaps indeed, very remotely, related to that we have been considering, is of great value in its tendency to make us charitable in our judgment of our fellow creatures. If everything is governed by the law of necessity, the nature of man, being what it is, can never be anything else. Here again, I am on dangerous ground, and must take care what I am about. But disclaiming with all earnestness and sincerity, the licentiousness of thinking which might lead to a supposition of irresponsibility on the part of human beings,—and most firmly persuaded that a day of grace and salvation is offered to every man, and that it is his own fault if he does not use it to his moral improvement,—I would say that the doctrine of necessity is calculated to make us charitable in judging of the failures and crimes of others, because we know not in the first place the circumstances of their physical organization;—a condition which I am phrenologist enough to consider sufficiently inflexible in its results, to furnish a ready solution of many mistakes, and worse than mistakes.

In the second place, whilst we know not how far

the circumstances of an individual's history may have addressed peculiar snares and temptations to his particular temperament, we are tolerably certain of possessing, as it respects ourselves, an acquaintance with something in the nature of an overruling law, as having saved us again and again, even when we did not want to be saved. We know enough in short, or ought to do, of our own case to remind us of the propriety of keeping our mouths "as it were with a bridle," from the utterance of all censure upon that of others.

"How much," says the pious Herbert,

"How much, preventing God,—how much I owe
To the defences thou hast round me set;
Example,—custom,—fear,—occasion slow,—
These scorned bondsmen were my parapet;
I dare not peep over the parapet,
To gauge with glance the roaring gulf below;—
The depths of sin to which I had descended,
Had not these me against myself defended."

There is yet another consideration of the doctrine of necessity which appears to me to be greatly helpful in staying and strengthening the mind, and bringing it to a harbour of rest; and that is in the deliverance which it effects from all restless anxieties on the subject of individual influence. How many are the occasions on which it seems as if we have only to state our impressions in order to produce the desired effect upon the mind of another, so reasonable, and almost self-evident do those im-

pressions appear to us. A wise parent, for instance, perceiving the folly, the rashness, the ignorance with which his children are bent upon their particular purposes, is just at his wits' end to make them see the case as he does. A preacher, or teacher of any kind, warmed by good wishes and good will for his fellow creatures,—and supposing that his long and dearly bought experience, backed, it may be, by age and imputed knowledge, will surely gain him a hearing and cause his audience to believe that "days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom;"—finding, as he often must, that his appeals are fruitless,—is ready to throw up the mission he believes to be appointed him in despair and disappointment, and to regard his influence as scarcely worth the trouble of using. But when he is firmly persuaded that he has nothing to do with results, inasmuch as they are governed by their own laws, and that his only concern is to endeavour at fulfilling the law of God written upon his heart and conscience, and confirmed to him by the Scriptures; and, in his place and condition, to be found doing his duty, assured that, in the unswerving nature and necessity of things, every honest faithful warrior in the cause of truth will, sooner or later, discover as Mr. Carlyle says, that "one's poor battle in this world is not quite a mad and futile, that it is perhaps, a worthy and manful one which will come to something yet;"*—he feels

* Life of Sterling, p. 248.

beneath him a rock on which he may securely build an everlasting dwelling place.

Scarcely any lesson has been more indelibly and practically fixed upon my own mind than that which has taught me the wisdom and proper humility of foregoing all anxiety respecting the consequences of supposed personal influence. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand."—"As thou hast freely received, freely give;" for it is thy duty towards God and man so to do. But, "thou knowest not," neither is it thy business to know, "whether shall prosper, this or that." "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter." "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," is the invariable language with which in the kingdom of nature and of grace he silences the pride of man, and stills his restlessness and futile solicitude about events.

In the meanwhile with good cheer and full of hope that every honest effort in the cause of virtue will be "sanctified and made meet for the Master's use," let us remember that "no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." How many simple words of truth and righteousness, as unconsciously uttered as the bird in the desert pours forth its solitary song, have found their way to the soul that wanted them, and have comforted and helped it long after the mortal frame from whence they emanated has been mouldering in the dust!

" God did anoint thee with his odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign ;—and he assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow workers of the soil,
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour to their hearts and hands,
From thy hands and thy heart and thy brave cheer;
And God's grace fructify through thee to all."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHEREWITHAL shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."

This comprehensive query and response arrested me long and I think, profitably this morning, as I took for the subject of my meditations a portion of that divine Psalm * which, though read it may be for the thousandth time, is ever new, ever fraught with materials for prayer, for praise, for instruction, for every thing in short, that addresses itself to the best and most enduring of man's faculties.

I saw with a force and distinctness beyond words to express, how essential it was to possess within the soul a principle of life and wisdom superior to ourselves — our poor selves, — yea, our terrible selves how often may we say, when we contemplate self in its rashness, ignorance and folly, especially under the heedlessness and impetuosity of youth,

* Psalm cxix.

alive with the most intense force of life to the seductions of the passions, but dead with the deepest sleep of death to the actual character and debasing tendency of those passions, and the degrading thraldom in which they enslave and subdue humanity. "Wherewithal shall the young escape these snares and cleanse their way?"

The divine condition of a pure heart, its blessedness, its solitary loveliness, blossoming like a lily in the desert, content and happy to turn its snowy bosom to its Creator in secret adoration of Him who "beautifies it with salvation,"—seemed to me not unattainable for human beings, but only *not* so in one way;—even the way here specified, the way which suggests the "taking heed" to every thought of the heart, "according to God's word."

I need scarcely say that I am not alluding to the Bible as so denominated by many religious persons; but very ignorantly, very incongruously, as we may quickly perceive, by testing the term according to their acceptation of it by the first verse in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, which would read somewhat preposterously, as "In the beginning was the Bible, and the Bible was with God, and the Bible was God."

No;—I am alluding to that ever-living, ever-speaking Word of God which is not printed upon paper,—not imprisoned in language,—not called the Bible, though I thankfully acknowledge that we

have cause to love and reverence the Bible for informing us of its nature, office, and dwelling-place.

And of the first,—what is its testimony? "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Its office? "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye would turn to the right hand and when ye would turn to the left."

Its dwelling? "The word is very nigh unto thee—in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

But to curtail all that need be said on this point; no part of Scripture is more diffuse in allusion to, and in praise of the living word of God under its different names of testimonies, law, statutes, &c. than this particular Psalm; written, be it remembered, before the Bible had any existence.

To know this precious Word then, seems to me to comprize nearly all the knowledge that is essential to our peace and goodness. I do not mean the knowing it as a point of doctrine; though that is something,—and a great *something* too, considering how little distinct and definite prominence is given to it in the religious teaching of the day;—

but I mean the knowing it as "very nigh us;"—as often saying to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" as "piercing even to the dividing of our soul and spirit;" and, above all, as that "quick and powerful discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," which cuts them in sunder as with "a two-edged sword," separating between the precious and the vile, and so clearly showing us both, in the glance of a moment, that it leaves us no alternative but to choose aright, if we would be good and happy, and such as our Father which seeth us in secret would have us to be.

"Oh that I had known this blessed guide in the days of my youth!" said I to myself, as I mused upon the notional, doctrinal, inoperative way in which, like other young persons, I had imbibed my religious knowledge; a knowledge, which, however it might reach the head, and so far the conscience, that I should have drawn back at once from openly breaking any of the ten commandments, had, as far as I can remember, no relation to the purposes and inclinations of my heart; no work of watching and "taking heed thereto," assigned it. Nor do I believe, that, as religion is commonly inculcated, it does effect its proper and efficient office; at least, not in the mode and degree that is necessary for individual sanctification. Like everything else, particularly in the present day, religion is too much constructed upon the plan of great show with little reality. Thus, it evinces no lack of head-know-

ledge, no paucity of results of a rather astounding kind. I make no doubt but that almost every large national school could furnish half a dozen boys and girls who would chop religious logic with any doctor of divinity in the kingdom, and produce their scripture proofs for it at every turn, with, possibly, more readiness than the doctor.

But this is not the thing wanted. It is not by setting sharp-witted children to exercise their ability in hunting out texts for the solution of abstruse doctrinal points, and thereby turning the bible into a sort of charade book for them to make shrewd guess-work with, that anything else, or better, can be done than the manufacturing of a succession of stereotyped instructors in the like kind of conundrum play;—the cleverest of these children being usually in training as future teachers in national schools.

It is by the deeply felt power of religion in the tutor's own soul, as the one only principle of human conduct ever needed, and ever to be operating; it is by his possessing a living experience of the strength of corruption, and a quick apprehension of its early assaults upon the mind of youth, that an earnest, hopeful appeal can be made to *that* in the child or the young person which responds, after the nature of a holy instinct, to every touch of truth, and without which response, all religious instruction might as well be addressed to the benches and walls of the school-room, as to its inhabitants.

But is this appeal made,—and is the response to it obtained? and are the subjects on which the pupils are examined and addressed, of a kind to involve either, by being so direct, so intelligible, and so probing, as to come close to the capacity and conscience of any child who is old enough to go to a national school?

I think I should not be afraid to ask every Sunday and national school teacher in the land, if they ever expended half an hour at a time, or knew any one else to do it, in commenting earnestly and with direct personal application to the consciences of their young hearers,—on such a text as this from the 119th Psalm, or any other of a merely practical tendency, and which, being wholly divested of all peculiar doctrines, simply embodied those great fundamental principles of righteousness, which there is scarcely a possibility of "the wayfaring man though a fool" misunderstanding or misapplying.

I do not believe the thing is ever done. Most assuredly, I never witnessed it, except, as a pretty stout determination to teach my own class in my own way, enabled me to endeavour at doing so myself, when, many years ago I was for some time a constant weekly attendant at a national school as a teacher and examiner. I have said that I took my own way in this respect; but I must observe in passing, that I received an occasional hint that I was transgressing in doing so, and that I ought to

keep more to the routine of the school; that is to say, I ought to have gone on in the track of those orthodox instructors who, Friday after Friday, for the space of some seven years or so, I had seen sitting in the same place, and doling out the same phrases, much as the school-room clock had proceeded to tick and strike after one fashion for the same space of time. No matter how lifeless,—nor how profitless the work;—it was mapped out according to square and rule, and I was not to be substituting any heresies of my own in the room of such good old Dunstable doings.

I heard the transient murmur, it is true; but it was as though I heard it not; for I went on with calm delight in the way wherein, as I believed, the good Spirit of the Lord suggested that I should go in that particular part of my allotted mission; and amidst the few green pastures and quiet waters that refresh the landscape in which remembrance sometimes feeds, that hour of teaching amongst those children is, with me, endearingly conspicuous;—nor do I know that any tribute of praise was ever more purely sweet and cheering to my spirit, than the passing word I once heard in an accidental visit I made at the house of a relative of one of my little hearers, expressive of the interest the child took in my weekly lectures. That it was an intelligent and real interest I could perceive from the quotation of my own words, very little altered in the rendering. Words, blessed be God! that a child could under-

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stand; which is more than could be said of many other words then and there spoken.

To possess a clear, constant, hopeful faith in the presence and assistance of the Spirit of God in the souls both of the teacher and the taught, is the grand desideratum in all religious education. It is always asserted, at least whenever I propound these sentiments I find myself invariably met with the assertion, that this *is* the basis on which such instruction is imparted in national and Sunday schools; but the fact is certainly otherwise. Not only is the doctrine of the immediate presence and aid of the Holy Spirit in the soul *not* made a prominent part of the religious teaching of these schools, but it is not made so anywhere; though it is, of course, mixed up with other doctrines, but chiefly as that which may be taken for granted. Now, as Miss Edgeworth has said most justly, "half the mistakes of life arise from people's taking things for granted." On this very point of spiritual influence,—what darkness and confusion prevail; and in consequence of that darkness and confusion, what practical infidelity,—what loose apprehension of important truths,—what insecure and hopeless steps in life, are everywhere manifested! Yet, ask any person professing to make the precepts of the Bible his rule of life, whether he seeks constantly the direction of the Spirit of God, and believes himself to be guided in his general conduct by its influence, and, beyond all doubt, his reply will be in the affirmative; at all

events, he will have no hesitation in saying that he hopes and intends it to be so. In short, he takes the thing for granted.

I am quite certain it is what I myself took for granted till I was past forty; and I dare say I should have gone on to do so, but that some remarkable, and very afflictive circumstances in my personal history, constrained me about that time, to seek a deeper and a more influential faith in divine things than I found myself possessed of. It was nothing on the outside of me,—nothing in the shape of doctrinal knowledge (for there I was affluent) that was sufficient in that day of storm and tempest to stay my soul. I felt the need of something within myself to fall back upon, that was wiser and better than myself, or anything in the shape of intellect that I could call mine. To the distinct perception of what this was, I was first guided by the letters of William Law, which a friend at that time lent me. What life and power, what strength to do or to suffer, did my soul seem to imbibe from this passage!

"God is no otherwise your God but as he is the God of your life, manifested in it; and he can be no otherwise the God of your life but as his Spirit is living within you. Satan is no other way knowable by you, or can have any other fellowship with you, but as his evil spirit works and manifests itself along with the workings of your own spirit. 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you;' but he is

no where to be resisted but as a working spirit *within you;* therefore, to resist the devil, is to turn from the evil thoughts and motions that arise within you. 'Turn to God, and he will turn to you;' but God is an universal spirit which you cannot locally turn to or from; therefore, to turn to God, is to cleave to those good thoughts and motions which proceed from his Holy Spirit dwelling and working in you. This is the God of your life; to whom you are to adhere, listen, and attend; and this is your worshipping him in spirit and in truth. And that is the 'devil that goeth about as a roaring lion,' who has no voice, but that which he speaks within you. Therefore, my friend, be at home, and keep close to that which passes within you; for be it what it will, whether it be a good in which you delight, or an evil at which you grieve, you could have neither the one nor the other, but because a holy God of light and love is essentially dwelling in you. Seek therefore for no other road, nor call anything the way to God, but solely that which his eternal, all-creating Word and Spirit work within you."

"This is what I want!" I said aloud; "even the presence and help of this invisible Mentor." I saw at once how safe, how secure must be the interior condition of the creature who watches for, and obeys the silent pointings of the Holy Spirit

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* Law's Letters, p. 95, new edition, 1815.

of Truth. I could perceive with a force and precision hitherto unknown to me, the meaning of those expressions, "Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I might not sin against thee;" "My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word." "I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies." "Lord, I am thine, save me." The nearness, the affectionateness, (with reverence I would speak the word,) which this view of the subject established between the soul and its Creator, was so inexpressibly sweet to me, that, for a time, I could do nothing but praise and adore the Providence which had brought it to me like bread from heaven. From that time to the present hour, I can relish no reading, no teaching, no conversation on religious topics, no views of morality, no representations of human life which do not recognise this view of "turning to God, and cleaving to those good thoughts and motions which proceed from his Holy Spirit dwelling and working in us," as the one work and business of the soul that yearns for deliverance from evil. As Mr. Law suggests, and, as an axiom to which all that is within me yields a ready Amen, I "seek for no other road, I call nothing else the way to God, but solely that which his eternal, all-creating Word and Spirit work within me."

And surely, in the common-sense view of the matter, far more glory must be given to the Crea-

tor by this faith in, and submission to, the power and operation of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the soul, and "creating it anew unto good works," than in the Calvinistic views of an imputed righteousness, by which it is *supposed* by the Divine Being to be good and holy though it be actually polluted with sin. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain," saith the Apostle; decisively, as I conceive, inculcating the great practical precept that we are "workers together" with the Holy Spirit of God in so far as we make a good use of the grace he gives us. Now, I boldly say, that it is making worse than no use of it,—that it is turning it into licentiousness, when we fill our heads with notions that a holy, and heart-searching God will account us to be righteous in any imputed way, or in any way at all, but as we have faithfully "worked out our salvation" under the dictates and help of that manifestation of his own Spirit which he has bestowed upon us to profit withal.

Through much infirmity, and many failures, and fearful struggles, no doubt, must this holy work be done. Sharp and frequent, beyond all question, must, in the nature of things, be the conflicts, where the creature's ardent thirst and strong capacity for earthly joy, perpetually excited by outward objects and internal wishes, are as perpetually opposed and chastised by the Divine Monitor that knows and resists, *in us*, their ignorant importuni-

ties. But oh, how sweet and cheering the well-grounded hope, that it is under these exercises and "searchings of heart," that the "building fitly framed together," is growing "unto an holy temple for the Lord," in which we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but rather grievous; yet *afterwards* it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

There is a beautiful and most consolatory prayer in the four first verses of the 20th Psalm: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel."

Never doubt whether or not God will remember your offerings of thought, word, or deed; for all things that have ever had existence, be they good or bad, must necessarily remain in existence somewhere, and in some form, however they may pass away from minds and memories, in their present state, so imperfect as ours. Every thought, word, and deed of every human creature, we may believe, will remain and manifest themselves to us, when in that altered mode of being into which death will introduce us, we shall be fitted to contemplate them in the glance of truth and eternity; a glance which

can know no fractional views and comprehensions, but which must at once embrace their entire nature and remotest relations.

Then we shall behold what we have been doing in the business of life, and what the wisdom of God has made of our doings. Then we shall experience that severest of all chastisements, the sight of truth beheld too late; or that most sweet and benign of all compensations, the disclosure of our inward state as "all glorious," and "brought unto the King in raiment of needlework," whose precious threads the Holy Spirit of the Lord has gathered out of our living sacrifices of wish and will, and woven "with the hand of a cunning workman" into a robe of righteousness wherewith to clothe us in that day!

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is no kind of reading so delightful to me as autobiography, when simple and sincere; a qualification so rarely existing in that department of literature, that my enjoyment of it is reduced to nearly a nullity.

It could not, and ought not indeed, to be possible for an individual to exhibit such an entirely faithful picture of his mind as would admit the public to a view of it which is only proper to be laid before his Maker.

Truly and beautifully has a charming poetess said—

> "If all the gentlest hearted friends I knew
> Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
> That still grew greater till its pulse was less
> For life than pity;—I should yet be slow
> To bring my own heart nakedly below
> The palm of such a friend, that he should press
> My false ideal joy, and sickly woe,
> Out to full light and knowledge."*

* Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

No, it is not meet that too familiar a disclosure of personal history should be made public. But it does not appear impossible or unseemly, to represent it with as near an approach to truth as shall render it a kind of mirror wherein other minds may behold themselves to a profitable and deeply interesting purpose. It is a possibility, however, which is very rarely realized; not merely from the proper considerations which restrain undue communicativeness, but also from the influence of motives which are not quite so justifiable, and which it is scarcely necessary to say, arise from self love, and the dissimulation to which that subtle agent prompts the mind.

This obstacle to the integrity of purpose which gives its chief value to autobiography, is nowhere so formidable as in the cases where one would most desire its absence. It is just those of whom we most wish and want to know the interior nature,—those who as authors, actors, senators, statesmen, or who in any kind of character have come before the world, that are the least likely to satisfy our longings; and that from the very circumstance which makes them of sufficient importance to excite them. It is because they *are* public people, and important people; because they cannot but be conscious that every line they write in the closet will some day "be proclaimed on the house-tops,"—and that like regal personages, they will be sure to have a train of observers in their track, let them go which way

they will;—it is because of their capacity to tell us much, that they usually tell us nothing that is worth the hearing. The consciousness that all their words are future gold, and that the veriest shreds and patches of their pen will be available in the market, almost necessarily, suffices to destroy with its baleful influence, the humble, simple spirit of candour wherewith the task of autobiography can alone be properly undertaken. Hence, in reading such works it is not by what is said, but usually by what is omitted, that the proper estimate of the writer's character is to be drawn; for he that is fully aware of a rapturous reception from an admiring audience, will no more come before them in deshabille, than Carlotta Grisi would present herself to perform a distinguished *pas* in her dressing gown.

I am not aware of ever having read more than one book in which the writer's interior condition was so faithfully unveiled, that I laid it down every now and then, and much in the same spirit as I would have gone to the glass to see how I looked externally, I turned my attention inwardly to the mirror which honest John Rutty, the quaker, set before my mind.

Here are a few samples, culled at random from this curious record.

1. "The day concluded badly in inordinate passion on a sudden attack."

2. "Is brother —— vile; and Dr. —— vile;

and my servant vile? I have been more vile in thy presence, Lord, on many occasions."

3. "More severe on the offences of others than on my own;—turn thy anger inwards, henceforwards."

4. "Lying too long in bed, disconcerted the whole day."

5. "A frappish, choleric day."

6. "O my insolence! What are my troubles compared to theirs at Lisbon!"*

7. "Anger on importunate and ill-timed teazing for money, cast a gloom on this whole day."

8. "Snappish."

9. "In the very moment of temptation, God was with me."

10. "It is very hard to say the Lord's prayer sincerely."

11. "Very impatient on my servant's sickness at a critical time."

12. "Choler reigned in the morning."

13. "A black evening;—a fit of downright anger on a supposed injury, and for want of timely resisting, it proceeded. Lord, pardon."

14. "*Principiis obsta*, on attacks of anger; others have real causes of sorrow,—thine imaginary."

15. "The metaphorical rickets, a real malady of

* This was written in 1755, the year of the great earthquake at Lisbon.

the soul analogous to that of the body, viz: a counsellor's head (rich in notions) but a sucking infant's limbs (in practice): Lord, strengthen!"

16. "God hath shown thee thy picture in two of thy acquaintance—dogged and insulting." *

There may be doubts if this is properly to be called autobiography, but there can be none as to its being personal experience; and what could be so instructive, what so intensely interesting, if, with an eye to God as the Author of all things, and piously deducing their particular dispensations from the way in which they had, or had not, been obedient to his requirements as made known to them by his Witness in their consciences,—persons were to impart instruction and information to their fellow-

* Dr. John Rutty was a physician of some eminence in Dublin where he resided, and where he died in 1776. He was in the habit of keeping a spiritual diary, which he left for publication after his death, and from which the above extracts are taken.

In justice to his memory I must add, that the Editor of this work observes, that "notwithstanding his many sharp animadversions on himself (particularly for moroseness of temper) I am warranted to assure the reader, from the testimony of many of his surviving friends, that they never saw any cause to suspect him of it." The testimony concerning him in the religious society to which he belonged, is also highly favourable to him in that respect. "His temper," says the document, "appeared pleasing and well guarded; —mild in reasoning with persons from whom he differed in judgment, even on important and interesting subjects."

creatures in the way of relating their personal experience?

And why should they not? Simply because they have either no such experience to give, or, if they have, they dare not do it for fear of being laughed at as fanatics or enthusiasts, and in some way or another losing caste with the false and frivolous part of mankind.

Rare as it is, and from the nature of the case, rare as it must, I suppose, continue to be, to meet with a faithful mental history, I still go on hunting in the trail of all memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies, in the hope of finding something to enrich and confirm my views of human life; and though I seldom or never get anything that has the smallest semblance to nature and truth,—yet in the absence of both, there is often enfolded a striking lesson.

One book that I have lately read, and which I could not rest till I had obtained a sight of, seems to me highly illustrative of this. It was rather the name of Emerson indeed, as one of the Editors of it than anything else, that excited my appetite for its perusal; but still, as memoirs of a woman, and a very remarkable one too, in her place and condition, I hoped to get some further reach into those depths of soul and feeling, which it is peculiarly the nature and the province of woman to sound,—from the perusal of "Memoirs of Margaret Fuller, Marchesa d'Ossoli."

And the book *is* remarkable certainly, and very instructive too; but it is in an incidental and obscure way;—just in that secret, silent way in which everything most impressive and most real in human history is commonly imparted to the observer of such things. Rely upon it that you will learn nothing by only taking what people set before you. Look after that which they keep back,—for there the gist of the matter lies. What they *do*, and what they *are*, that is everybody's history, enclosed in the space of a nutshell, as everything true is. I am so persuaded of this, that my reading is necessarily, very much abridged; and few are the books of which I do not skip at least half.

There is something in the first glance we cast upon a new book, (at least so it is with me) which tells at once whether or not it will be pleasantly readable. Particular words catch the eye, and striking the mind something after the manner in which a tuning-fork strikes a piano-forte, they elicit a response which is or is not in unison with the thoughts they awaken. There are certain terms and phrases which in the twinkling of an eye, extinguish all my hopes and expectations from a book.

This is a prejudice, some will say, and should be overcome. There may be something of prejudice in most instantaneous decisions; but I have lived long enough to have a great respect for first and prompt impressions; and in regard to books, I scarcely know the occasion in which a glance of

five minutes over a new one, did not suffice to tell me its genuine character; and I dare say, most readers (by which I mean people who really do read a book, not those who look at it) would say the same.

When therefore, in the "Memoirs of Margaret Fuller, Marchesa d'Ossoli," I caught the names of Dante, Goethe, Ariosto, and poetical allusions in English, German, and Italian to the arts,—to genius, and such like spangles, sprinkling almost every page, I had a strong presentiment that I was to meet with a mind too stilted to furnish her observers with the plain homespun which is "your only wear," in such a world as this;—and which is so constantly useful, that one is ready to beg, borrow, or steal a bit of it wherever it can be found. Nevertheless I met with much, especially in that part of the work which is edited by Mr. Emerson, both to instruct and interest;—and in so far as one can reduce the inflated terms in which they are expressed to their simple purport, many of her own statements are marked by great power and truth. Throughout the whole, however, one is pained to perceive that she is but performing a part in the melo-drama of which her imagination makes her the heroine, and that scarcely anywhere in the book do we meet with the real woman, and the real heart, as good John Rutty would deal with, and exhibit it before the reader. The probability is, that it was never faithfully exhibited even before

its owner. "She looked upon life," says Mr. Emerson, "as an art, and every person not merely as an artist, but as a work of art."

Here is the secret of that want of sympathy and approbation which is felt in reading her memoirs.

"She looked upon herself," again observes the acute Emerson, (would that he would give us *his* mental history) "as a living statue which should always stand on a polished pedestal, with right accessaries, and under the most fitting lights. She would have been glad to have everybody so live and act. She was annoyed when they did not, and when they did not regard her from the point of view which alone did justice to her."

Far from singular is this concentration of the mind of a person of genius upon an artistic contemplation of itself. But what a false and fatal one to take! and how, almost invariably, does it so blind and dazzle the mental vision, that it is wholly unfitted to behold and understand the simplicity of truth, and make that proper application of it to the circumstances of life, which can alone deliver us from being more or less their victim.

It is not surprising therefore, that, after having been dazzled and bewildered, and except as Mr. Emerson is the relator, much mystified by the superlatives of the poor lady herself and her biographers, we arrive at the plain intelligible fact of her clandestine marriage with a foreigner younger than herself,—of different tastes,—of insufficient means,

and in so far as one can judge of the case, in every respect totally unfit for her. This, however, is the best part of the book; for it presents us with the wise and blessed moral which warns all persons of genius before the whole powers of the mind are given to the sedulous cultivation of accomplishments, to establish a severe discipline over the imagination, that restless and magical faculty, "the mistress of witchcrafts," of which it may not be too much to say, that directly or indirectly, it is the fruitful parent of nearly all the mischief in the world. Nowhere is its dangerous influence more manifest than in the hearts and destiny of women. Educated to be attractive externally, rather than intrinsically wise and good, and from their position in human affairs, condemned to depend upon others for aid and favour at every turn,—the whole force of their nature is prone to run out in a sickly sort of sentimentality and practising for effect, which is, perhaps, more to be dreaded than any open violation of truth; for there we cannot be imposed upon to take evil for good;—but, the taking Satan himself for an angel of light, is a very easy process in lovers of the romantic, who are usually skilled performers in those interior theatricals which cause many lives to be passed in a mere succession of fables and representations.

Had the life of Margaret d'Ossoli been spared, it is probable that far more edifying, because more real and chastened views of things would have

occupied her mind, and given value to her publications. Whenever distinguished persons come down from their pedestal, and mix with the crowd who walk upon the ground, and are content to pick up from thence such broken fragments of experience as will turn to account, and which nobody has a chance of finding anywhere else, they speak from that in themselves, and address that in their hearers, which has reason on its side. "Always address yourself," says Dr. Whichcote, "to the reason of the thing;—there is an Almighty power in this."

But it was this poor lady's melancholy fate in returning to her native land after an absence of four years, to be shipwrecked with her husband and child, when nearly at the end of their voyage from Italy to the United States. So unexpected and deeply affecting a catastrophe, disarms all criticism, and leaves to us only the desire to deduce from her Memoirs, the broad, fundamental facts that can be generalized into principles;—a result which gives to the study of history, whether it be that of nations or of individuals, its legitimate value and importance.

The mind in solitude within itself, continually feels a yearning for fellowship and communion with its kind, which is not to be satisfied by conventional intercourse. It desires that the door of other minds should be thrown open, and admission granted to it for entrance and observation there; and though, as in the present case, the view obtained is too

much obscured by mistiness and mistake to be a very satisfactory one, it leaves upon the thoughtful observer as I have already said, a valuable moral, in leaving him deeply impressed with a conviction of the necessity of self-control, instituted and directed by a redeeming principle superior to self.

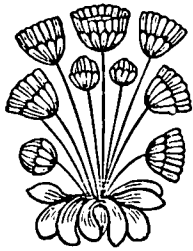
In our mysterious and mixed condition, wherein, however guarded by outward restraints, or aided and comforted by friends, or amused and admired by society, our thoughts and feelings (those great realities) are all transacted in solitude, and in that silent world *within* which is to all intents and purposes, our only real world,—how essential is it perpetually to inquire, and well understand, what is going on, and who prompts and governs *there!*

Not *that*, nor *those*, be assured, of whom the general run of diaries, and memoirs, and prettily-phrased epistles, and "rose water" biography tells. No, no. Some strange unexpected incident in the individual's life, perhaps some wild disproportioned marriage, in a word, some quite unforeseen act which causes everybody to lift up hands and eyes, and exclaim "You surprise me; who would have thought it!" these are historians which come forth now and then from the silent world to suggest to those who "have an ear to hear," the wisdom of keeping watch and ward at its portals, of displacing self-will as a usurper, and of establishing on its throne the rightful governor of those realms, even he who says—

" Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

" For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

" But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." (Proverbs viii. 34—36.)



CHAPTER X.

SO intense is the power of self-love and self-adoration in all of us till the love of God comes in and breaks it down, that the real beauty of humility is hardly possible to be conceived of by the natural mind; but I think some touches of it may be felt in the sweet sensations that accompany the pity one feels for the sufferings of the innocent and the helpless; such as sick or ill-used infants and children, poor animals, or anything else that is oppressed without manifesting any resentment, or having the will or power to manifest any, towards the oppressor.

I remember two pictures of extreme simplicity both in the conception and execution of them, which I could scarcely look at without even painful emotion, so forcibly did they penetrate to something in the depth of my nature that lovingly responded to the appeal. One represented a trial for witchcraft in the time of James the First,* in which a helpless

* Exhibited four or five years ago in the Annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy.

old woman was being dragged before a magistrate as a witch. The innocence of the poor creature's face, contrasted with the ferociousness of her accusers, one of whom was holding her cat over her head, her powerlessness and submission to her fate, and twenty other inexpressibly sweet touches of the artist, were quite irresistible.

The other picture pourtrayed the death of a French officer who was standing with his eyes bandaged, in front of a row of soldiers with their guns presented, and just about to shoot him. This would have been simply a very melancholy sight; but the artist, to break one's heart, had represented the culprit's faithful dog jumping up, and fawning, and looking up in his master's face, as if wondering why he stood there, and yet, half guessing the dreadful cause, looking so full of grief that one could almost fancy one heard the whining of the poor animal. I do not know what can be at the root of the feelings that affect one in these contemplations, unless it be the touching charm of helpless humility.

But why should I be puzzled that I do not know? seeing that we know nothing of the nature of those attractions or repulsions which ever and anon

"Striking the electric chain wherewith we're darkly bound,"

wake up associations of love or aversion, delight or dislike, which we can neither define nor understand.

That inexplicable feeling to which few persons are strangers, which, under a condition perfectly new to us, indicates a reminiscence more or less vivid of our having been, on some former occasion, just so circumstanced, gives one of these strokes upon "our electric chain" that never fails to set me deeply cogitating upon the doctrine of man's pre-existence. It is a doctrine, to be sure, that one can derive no profit from, except as it conveys an impression of our having once been in nearer connexion with the Author of our being, and a confident hope that the broken link in the heavenly union will be eventually restored.

Few things of a visionary and conjectural kind, seem to me more forcibly to inspire this idea, than the connection which almost invariably exists between the perception of moral beauty, and devotional feeling. There is something so touching, so tender, so humble, in all real beauty, that, except its appeals are obstructed by pride and unusual apathy, we shall perceive them to be generally received with emotions that yearn to express themselves in tears and adoration.

One would say, that like poor children exiled from their father's house, and estranged from his loving countenance, we catch in these passing gleams, just enough remembrance of the glory and goodness of both, to make us languish for the everlasting joy we know they have in store for us. We would "sing again the Lord's song" in our native

land, and we believe that we shall do so yet. These lovely little irradiations come to cheer and fill us full of peace and hope in believing that "this God," this Fountain of beauty and perfection, "is our God, and that He will be our guide even unto death."

How strange beyond all strangeness, and how dreadful too, seem those views of religion which inspire terror of that great Being who can only be our hope and confidence as we know and contemplate him in his scriptural designation of Love. "God is Love"—those three words! Why do people preach any other! and why is anything but Love as the healer, the redeemer, the "companion, guide, and own familiar friend" of the soul, ever set before it as its desideratum?

How sorrowful, and how perceptible is the reason that this is not, and cannot be done, because of the intense power and unceasing operation of that enmity and pride which separate nearly the whole human race from everything that is lovely and true.

Cowper has said—

> "'Tis pleasant from the loopholes of retreat
> To look at such a world."

I do not find it so. In fact, I scarcely dare to look at it at all; and when I say this, it is in no spirit of presumption which would insolently cry, "Stand by, I am holier than thou;" but under a persuasion that where the temperament is peculiarly susceptible

of passing impressions, liable to be taken captive by them, and morbidly inclined to dwell upon, and magnify evil, the difficulty of recognizing beneath the maze of iniquity that surrounds us, the fathomless ocean of Divine Love on which it floats, is so overwhelming, that, but for the immortal nature of faith and hope, it could not be but that both must be shipwrecked.

I do not think, however, that evil itself offers a more saddening subject for contemplation, than many of the things which pass for good, and to the pursuit of which, so much time, and talent, and energy, are constantly devoted.

If I should say that amongst these, religion itself, according to the common acceptation of the term, occupies a prominent place, of course it would be nothing but my happy insignificance and obscurity that would shield me from being pursued with much the same outcry wherewith people pursue a mad dog. So I shall not say it. But I will, as meekly as I can, merely request the courteous reader of my lucubrations, to consider what is the distinct end and object of all religious teaching. Simplify the matter my friend, and put it into the smallest possible compass, and then say if the point to which all religious instruction tends and at which it terminates, is not the re-union of the creature with the Creator, from whom some terrible lapse of his nature has evidently separated him? for without going to the Scriptures to authorize and confirm

the existence of this fact (though I will do that presently) it is sufficient to appeal to the rational faculties of every human being, whether any thing could be more strange and astounding, than that a pure and holy God should be the Father of so degenerate and grovelling a son; and that the original endowment of his offspring should be "a carnal mind at enmity with Himself." I do not know any fact in science more demonstratively proved upon its own testimony, than that man is a creature fallen away from his Creator and the holy life originally received from him, into a life of matter, and corruption, and sensuality, and self-pleasing, and the pursuit of transient, trivial, and false enjoyments; so trivial and so false, even under their most glittering aspects, that there can scarcely be found the individuals so wholly blinded to their contemptibility, as not, under the pressure of disease and the prospect of death, to denounce them as delusions, and as far as possible, to counsel those they leave behind, to devote themselves to better and more enduring objects of desire and aim.

What sentence did Walter Scott ever pen in his thousands of pages,—what instruction did he ever impart to the world, that equalled in value and reality those touching words addressed to his son-in-law from the bed of death!

"Lockhart, I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man;—be virtuous, —be religious,—be a good man. Nothing else will

give you any comfort when you come to lie here."*

I would now turn my reader to the Scriptures for confirmation of the point to which I have presumed to call his attention. Look at them and scan their purport as closely as you can. You will find that two or three texts will suffice to put you in possession of the fact of man's corruption.

"So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee," says the Psalmist; and again, "there is none that doeth good."

"We ourselves," says the Apostle, "were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,—living in malice and envy,—hateful, and hating one another."

How graphic is this picture,—how true in every lineament! Take every member of the sentence, and where is the human being whose conscience does not apply it with, "*thou art the man!*"

It is this foolishness,—disobedience, and liability to deception,—this thraldom to the dominion of "divers lusts and pleasures,"—this bitter malignity of heart,—"hateful and hating"—so that much more than half the literature, half the intercourse, and half the pleasure of half the human beings in the world, consist in holding up the other half to ridicule and censure,—it is this "earthly, sensual, devilish" condition which stands in need of redemption. And here it is.

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* Scott's Life of Lockhart, People's Edition, p. 753.

" After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Now, I would ask every man, woman, or child, that was competent to be talked to about religion, whether anything can be more simple than what is here set before the soul as the means of that redemption which it wants. It cannot be accomplished by works of righteousness undertaken in the creature's own strength and will, and as such, works which must, necessarily, be defiled by the influence of pride and self-conceit;—but it is done by a process which is figuratively designated as the " washing of regeneration." That is to say, " God our Saviour " in his mercy and love to his fallen and ignorant creature, draws near to him in the secret recesses of his heart and conscience, and there in a still small voice warns him from evil, or prompts him to good, by ever saying to him as occasions for doubt and danger arise, " this is the way, walk ye in it;" and thus, "renewing him unto good works, by the power of the Holy Spirit" measurably bestowed according to his need.

How beautifully is this divine mode of feeding the soul, and the nature of the food given to it, shadowed forth by the manna in the wilderness!

" And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a

small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground."

"This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat;"—these small rations of truth which you will find ready for you just as you want them; but of which you are to make no store, or magnify into works of righteousness that you can call your own; but, in a spirit of child-like dependence, trusting to your Father for the supplies of which he better knows your need than you do yourself, you are to honour him by the obedience of faith; than which, no act of religion you can perform is more beneficial to yourself, or glorifying to Him.

If we have here a simple statement of the case,—if all we want to know is our spiritual disease and its remedy,—I think I may challenge the thoughtful reader to say if that want meets in any sufficient degree with its proper and appointed supply, in the general nature of religious instruction.

I well recollect the sentiments of disappointment (I might use a stronger term) with which I once listened to a discourse in London, from a preacher whom it was accounted a privilege to hear, and whose sermon I certainly prepared myself to listen to with due and reverent attention.

I am not likely indeed to forget the impression, which, on that occasion, caused me to ask myself what practical good, what addition to experience, what yearning of heart to say with the prodigal

"I will arise and go to my Father," could be hoped for, on the part of the congregation, from a dissertation on the use and value of the Athanasian Creed, and the various readings of its component parts that had been given by this and the other commentator, — which, (it being a day that required the reading of that portion of the liturgy) formed the staple commodity of the whole discourse.

"All sermons are not thus constructed," you will say;—and "heaven be praised that they are not!" I reply. It is with great satisfaction that I readily admit the existence of many zealous, faithful, honest ministers who, to the best of their belief, address their hearers in a plain, practical, intelligible way.

But the "best of their belief" seems to me too limited,—too straitened,—too much partaking of the cuckoo's note; which surely need not be;—for, although the same few and simple elements serve for the basis of all that can be called religion, yet, such are the diversity of ways in which the evil works that requires the use of religion, that there must ever exist an abundant variety of modes in which it may be applied. There are but seven notes in the gamut, yet they furnish materials for ever new delight, and inexhaustible beauty;—and sad indeed would it be, if, at every five out of six concerts we attended we heard nothing but *sol fa-ing*.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;"—and no one can be actuated by that Spirit or speak from its influence, who is in captivity to any sect or system, or whose freedom of thought is abridged by any considerations respecting his temporal interest. Such an one must, of necessity, talk in trammels; for let his capacity be as large as it may, he is to keep within prescribed limits, just as a horse tethered in a meadow can only browse in a certain circle, however fresh and verdant all beyond that circle may be.

Scarcely any thing can be more fatal to the diffusion of Truth, than the attempting to imprison it in any way, or to subject it to the government of opinions and majorities. Truth is not the subject of opinion or vote, or compulsion, and never can be made so. You may just as well prescribe to people how they are to love and hate, as how they are to believe. They may agree readily enough with what you set before them as their religion, because it is much easier to take up with what is ready-made to their hand, than to spend time and trouble in enquiring for themselves; but neither their verbal assent, nor their endeavours to persuade themselves that it is a genuine one, are worth a straw, except as they are actuated by something deeper than the submission to custom and authority which forms the chief reason with most people for believing in any thing.

They talk of making up their opinions about re-

ligion, and set about doing so very earnestly and sincerely; but the fact is that opinion has as little to do with our faith, as it has to do with our hunger and thirst. We can no more believe a vital truth upon the testimony of another person, than we can live and breathe by his life and breath. The mind may, no doubt, have a certain quantity of notions hung upon it, just as clothes are hung upon pegs in a wardrobe; but they will always remain as distinct from, and inoperative upon, its nature, as the contents of the wardrobe are external to the nature and condition of the body. It is the office of religious education to develop, not to add. You speak (or ought to do) to the conscience, which, at once, acknowledges and agrees with what you propose, if it is in unity with the nature of Truth;—if not, it has nothing to say to you.

And what a remarkable testimony to the uniting power of Truth is it, that, whilst we see no end to the differences of opinion in those sectarians who build their mode of faith on the letter of Scripture;—one finding salvation only in an adhesion to this text,—another in holding fast to the tenets he declares to be propounded in another, clean contrary to it;—adult baptism with one party,—infant baptism with another,—no baptism at all with a third;—sprinkling here,—immersion there,—and nothing but the confusion of Babel everywhere;—those who turn to an inward instructor, and, as much as pos-

sible, endeavour to be guided by the voice which says " my son give me thy heart, and let thine eye observe my ways," are universally of one mind, and cannot possibly be otherwise, because they acknowledge only one lawgiver, and one law, and both of these divine.

The whole of faith and obedience, and all that is comprised in the term religion, may, I think, be simplified into a sense of dependence upon God. Let our mental powers and resources be what they may, the solemn and incomprehensible mystery of our being, and of our ultimate destiny, is so near, so real, and so overwhelming, that scarcely any person is so obtuse, as not occasionally to feel almost appalled in the consideration of his belonging to he knows not whom.

I remember that when I was little more than a child, I have sometimes, while lying awake in the night, been visited with terrible apprehensions and inexplicable dread, at the thought of my own existence; but I had no idea that other youthful minds had ever been similarly exercised, till, in lately reading the memoirs of Margaret Fuller, I found my own early experience thus literally transcribed in hers:

" I remembered," she says, " how, as a little child, I had stopped myself one day on the stairs, and asked how I came here? How is it that I seem to be this Margaret Fuller? What does it mean? What shall I do about it? — I remembered all the

times and ways in which the same thought had returned."*

Unquestionably, this natural and awful thought would occur to almost everybody, and awaken in them the sense of dependence which is nature's own foundation for pious trust and hope, were it not drowned by the greater part of the world in the pleasures and pursuits of time and sense. Every man "is a god unto himself, and does that which is right in his own eyes," until sorrow or sickness, with the prospect of death, suddenly overtake him, and then he finds he is not his own property,—he is dependent upon he knows not what,—but he is sure it must be something,—and something very powerful. So then he sets himself to his prayers or his priest, according to the fashion in which he has been trained, and prepares to make it out as well as he can. Now, had this sense of dependence been made the rule of his life, of his affections, and of his prospects, had it been cultivated like any other of his innate good principles, would it not have done its own blessed and natural work, and linked him to his heavenly Father just as a child is linked by nature to its earthly parent? Assuredly it would. There is a natural necessity for the soul to depend upon God; it makes itself felt in that yearning for divine help and pity, and

* Memoirs of Margaret Fuller, vol. i. p. 184.

that instinctive turning towards the Almighty, which always accompanies affliction.

Beautiful is that word of the Apostle, "ye have received (that is ye have known and cherished in yourselves) the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father." And again he says, "likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." What thoughtful, earnest, loving heart but knows the power of these groans that cannot be uttered, and the sweetness of pouring them forth before Him who has been with the helpless soul throughout its whole earthly pilgrimage! — and who, in that sin,—in that repentance, —in that glittering snare,—in that dangerous hour, —in that trying season of bodily pain,—in that "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," in all that memory can recount, was ever near—ever counselling—ever consoling, and ever forgiving!

May God give us faith to trust in, and be taught by Him!

CHAPTER XI.

WHILST writing these pages, and giving the reins to my pen on the subject of religion with a license which I fear may be displeasing to some readers, I have often wished by way of explaining the cause of my taking so positive a side of the question, to relate some of the circumstances of my mental history; — but ever, as this desire has presented itself, I have been prevented from fulfilling it by a dread of thrusting myself, as an individual, into notice; — a feeling which, when people have passed the period of three score, and value no worldly possessions so much as ease and safety, it seems but prudent to entertain.

It appears, however, to me as if I were internally called upon to give "a reason for the hope that is in me;" — since, if we address the public at all in a didactic form, we are, as I conceive, bound to confirm those addresses with whatever we have to produce as personal experience. Nothing is sure to us but what we have acquired in that way; and

those who tell us what they *know*, and can set their seal to, as incontrovertibly found by *them* to be true, render us, if but little service, still, the best service that they can.

I had another motive too, for this desire to give a slight sketch of my mind's history;—for, rigidly forbearing to meddle with external facts, except as I might be absolutely obliged so to do for the elucidation of my somewhat erratic course as to religious pursuits,—it is to my interior experience I would confine myself. The motive to which I allude, was a wish to escape a charge of *mistiness* on the subject of religion which is brought against a recent little work of mine, in a certain periodical.

"Of the author's religious belief," says the critic, "it is difficult to speak. His favourite doctrine is the presence of an interior light in the soul of man; but of any means or channels to which the communication of that heavenly light is divinely annexed, he has no mention. In truth, a mistiness pervades all the directly religious conversations, which would seem to have been purposely circumfused."*

Nothing is much more difficult than to render abstract and general statements sufficiently clear and decisive, to put the reader in full possession of the writer's meaning; and, as I shall, probably, never again appear before the world as an author, and I would willingly obviate as far as I can, any

* Guardian—Review of "Visiting my Relations."

mistiness or confusion which may have hung upon the previous exhibition of my religious sentiments, it seems to me that now or never is the time for me to leave with my fellow mortals a little narrative of mental experience, of which I can only say that it is true. Much comfort, and occasionally even joy, has been my portion in remembering the way in which the Lord my God has led me through the waste howling wilderness of this world; and if any fellow pilgrim in that strange land shall, by the perusal of these my closing pages, be stimulated to look for his guidance and help where I have been taught to seek for them, I can never regret the disclosure I am now about to make; for I have felt for a great many pages past that I should certainly have to do it before I ended.

I am strangely puzzled in the outset of my task by a dilemma from which, although there is an easy exit, I confess I am extremely unwilling to extricate myself. I am quite persuaded, nevertheless, that it must be done; and that, triumphant, and what is better, secure as is the position I occupy, by being recognized in my authorship as of the nobler sex, I must state that it is a woman who comes before the public in the present work as its author.

It will be the natural effect of this announcement to denude my further statements of much value, except in the estimation of that generous fraction of the world who accord to women the right of pri-

vate judgment, and the capability of forming it on subjects of mind and conscience. They ought to possess this faculty, seeing that those domestic and intimate associations of heart and intellect which constitute the source of earthly felicity, are eminently within their ken, and in a great measure within their province. But be this as it may, whatever be the strength and expansion of man's intellect, the necessity for learning to endure patiently, falls largely upon woman; whose patrimony, for the most part, is little else than a profound capacity for sorrow.

It was a great inheritance of this kind that devolved to me, in the temperament I derived from my father, a vivacious Irishman, endowed with a remarkable portion of the impetuosity, propensity to blunder, and inexplicable confusions which render that unhappy nation a sort of anomaly in the creation. I think the very greatest of his mistakes was that of taking me home from boarding-school when I was just thirteen, in order, nominally, that I might be companionable to my mother, (of whom I was the youngest and only child she had left as a home resident—the others being disposed of by marriage and other ways,) and also to show proper obedience in a state of pupilage; for as my education could not, even in my father's rapid way of jumping to conclusions, be supposed to be finished, I was furnished with instructors in such branches of polite learning and accomplishment, as in those

days of simplicity when *ologies* as yet were not, sufficed for a young lady in the middle ranks of life.

I say that *nominally* I was taken home to be docile, and finish my studies, and make my mother happy as her companion, my father being frequently absent from home by reason of business engagements and other causes; and a few years later, perhaps I might have been sufficiently subdued by school discipline, and better matured faculties of reflection, to have submitted to the few restraints by which my residence under the parental roof limited my will; but I was then too young to have the least conception of the use and value of self-control, or any other idea of human life, but that people were to enjoy it as much as they could. Accordingly, to the full extent of such joys as Misses of thirteen covet, I made myself the possessor, and especially in the article of novel reading, in which I was to be called learned for my years. I was rather straitened in my stock of companions, both my father and mother being somewhat advanced in life, and quitting the stage, as far as consisted in entering much into society, when I came upon it; I therefore took up with what I could get as associates; and the nearest at hand being the cook and the housemaid, I generally transferred myself to the kitchen when my father and mother composed themselves for their after dinner's nap. Of the intercourse then and there carried on between me and my comrades for the time being, I can only re-

member that it was more merry than wise; and that none of my developing faculties were more potently elicited by it, than the propensity for fun, and turning things and people into ridicule, which was rather predominant in my nature.

It must not be imagined that I was left to run wild in this way without an occasional check from my parents. Very slightly, and but seldom was it bestowed on the part of my mother; who, not particularly happy herself in some of her domestic relations, was too well pleased to be amused with my capacity for entertaining her, to run the hazard of disturbing it with homilies that I detested and resented; but from my father it came pretty sharply, suddenly, and sometimes oftener than was wanted. Nothing could be more obvious than that I was running to waste in a fearful way, and demonstrating my views of things and people with a vivacity and energy less becoming than remarkable in so very young a person; and that it would be good for me to be curbed rather more than a little; but that it should be done after the manner in which you would curb a restive horse (I do not mean by the application of a whip, but of sharp words), was not quite so good; inasmuch as sharp words addressed to some natures, like rough treatment to some horses, tend to make them worse than they were before.

It was so with me. The indignation, the proud resentment with which I encountered reproof so

administered, produced results, which, deepening in their nature from year to year, rendered my position towards my poor father and his to me, one of the strangest and the most painful that I think it would be possible for parent and child to experience. And the stranger, and the more painful was it, because we each of us possessed beneath the bitter and vindictive traits of character that caused so much exasperation of feeling on both sides, a fund of affectionate and genial sympathies that only wanted the right training and regulation to have made us happy in the link which nature had established between us. But as I could not endure to be treated harshly, and resented every sort of opposition that came in the form of a command, and the nature that had me in check was my very counterpart, augmented by the possession of authority and a still stronger will, I could not be otherwise than most unhappy; and I was so as a very young girl, and still more so as a young woman. By that time, the mode of reproving which was distasteful to me as a child, had become so insupportable, as to excite in me a way of opposing it by harangues (for the most part true enough, but) so abominably impertinent, that almost any thing must have seemed better than to run the hazard of producing them. On this account I suppose it was, that gradually as I grew older, my father left me to myself, apparently with a silent disdain of interfering, except by occasional sarcasms, with any of my proceedings.

Though less irritating, this was scarcely a less wounding way of dealing with me. It was inexpressibly painful. No words that I could make use of would be strong enough to portray the anguish that rent my heart when strangers alluded to us as likely to be great comforts to one another. "Oh, would to God that we were!" I often said to myself; when the poor old man, advancing in years, unhappy too, in the course of his only son, seemed to stand so much more than ever in need of the consolations of a dutiful daughter.

Most deeply and constantly did my better nature groan to administer those consolations; for happily, —providentially, let me rather say,—amidst all this wreck of capabilities for good, something valuable in the shape of conscientiousness, and a love of truth and virtue survived within me. And oh, when occasions came, and, in the domestic life of twenty years be sure that strokes of affliction brought them, when the softer and better parts of both hearts were touched and drawn for a little interval towards each other, what a draught of saving health it was! what a gentle shower upon dried and withered instincts! what a removal of an avalanche of misery that bowed me to the earth! "Why should it not be always so?" I asked myself. But the depressing response was too soon given in the rapid falling back to old habits of reserve, silence, and gloom.

Nothing as it seems to me is so totally unconquer-

able, nothing so fearfully and irremediably oppressive, as the feeling of reserve and distance which uncongenial habits originate between relations, more particularly between parents and children. There is usually, in such ties, a natural shrinking from perfectly free and confidential intercourse. The authority to reprove on the one side, and the innate dislike of reproof on the other, united to the sort of awe which the idea of a ruler inspires, combine, I suppose, to produce in some instances this state of congealed affections.

If it should appear in any degree unseemly for me thus to dwell upon circumstances of so private a character, I can only plead in excuse for it that it would be totally impossible for me to relate my mental history without distinctly tracing it to the particular influence which this unhappy domestic position exercised upon the whole course of my life. Painful indeed was that influence, as I have sufficiently demonstrated; but it had a rich blessing enfolded in it, and one which the predominance of the religious sentiment in my nature rendered largely available. I cannot recollect the time in which I was not the better for sorrow; for I cannot remember the distress of any kind that did not, as by an instinct, carry me straight to God, as a child when vexed runs to its mother for help and comfort. And here, as a physical fact, that may not be without its significance to the thoughtful observer of nature, I may mention a circumstance

that possibly carries with it some solution of the rather singular fact of a child of ten years old under a deep sense of injury and injustice, hastening to her own little room, shutting the door, and kneeling down to implore with sobs and tears of God to comfort her, as I well remember doing on one occasion when, about that age, I had been unkindly treated, or rather, injudiciously; for the lecture that wounded me was certainly wanted; only the words and way in which it was delivered, something worse than annihilated all the benefit it was designed to convey. The circumstance to which I allude, was once, and only once, with affecting earnestness, brought before me by my mother on some occasion of disturbance between me and my father. She had sometimes thought, she said, that the cause of the wretched estrangement which existed between him and me, had its origin in the misery that his restlessness and irritability of temper (always a disturbing force to everybody) had more particularly occasioned her during her pregnancy with me, than with any other of her children—"I never lived so unhappily with him as during that time," she said. She did not add, but from her devotional nature I could feel assured of the fact, that she never lived so much in the habit of prayer. Her unborn offspring had need of the act as well as herself; and if erroneous, it has been still very sweet to me to believe that I benefited both by her sorrow and her supplications; though possibly,

in the mysterious operation of physical causes, I might inherit from her troubled mind many strange and melancholy feelings in relation to my other parent.

Let me, however, in justice to my poor father, state, that his faults were never of an immoral kind. He was a strictly honest, benevolent, and on the whole, a generous man; and, from first to last, in spite of all hinderances, my mother was devotedly attached to him, as, in his eccentric, Irish way, he was also to her; and very sure I am that he would have felled any body to the earth, who occasioned her a thousandth part of the uneasiness that he himself did.

In the meanwhile that I was thus unhappy in my connexion with him, I was truly loving and beloved in regard to my mother;—though being not the governed, but the governor there, I was, I deeply lament to say, a long way from exhibiting towards her the docility and dutifulness which are hard acquisitions in the way of behaviour for the young and the wilful to manifest towards the old. I was certainly not amiable. The irascible and bitter qualities which gave to my nature its fire and force, not having been in any proper way restrained and regulated, ran out like ugly weeds into a degree of self-love and self-pleasing which I did not recognise as a sin, till the selfishness and ingratitude of others against myself, occasioned me to remember that I had been guilty of it. Solemn and holy are

the seasons in which the events of life preach to us;—how many, and how precious have been their sermons to me! and how have they rendered a life of loneliness a never ceasing witness to the divine truth which tells us that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Even so!—and for ever blessed be the name of the "God of recompenses who doth and who will requite!"—but who, whilst he wounds, does with the very stroke, administer the balm of healing, and say to the contrite spirit, "for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

Amongst the other influences which operated very potently upon the development of my mind, and far more favourably than did my domestic position, was my place of abode, and the society to which it introduced me.

My paternal home was in a university town; a circumstance that afforded me intellectual advantages which are not to be enjoyed anywhere else, except in the high aristocratic circles to which persons in the grade of life I occupied have but a very limited access. My father's acquaintance with the members of the university, and indeed, latterly with everybody, was confined to very few individuals; but it embraced some highly gifted persons, and amongst others one whom it may suffice per-

haps if in these pages I simply call the Professor; that being the name he bore in virtue of an office he held in the university. He was old enough to be my father at the time of my introduction to him when I was about nineteen; an introduction which led to a lengthened and useful friendship of nearly forty years. The first link between us was formed by my possessing a native talent for music, which though never cultivated as it might have been, had I chosen to endure the usual modes of practice and labour by which pupils in that science attain to excellence, was yet sufficiently good to procure me considerable notice as no ordinary performer. It was not, however, so much the mode of my performance, though I may presume to say that that was generally acceptable, as the style of music I selected, which afforded pleasure to my audience; and so particularly to the Professor, that he became a frequent dropper in of an evening at my father's house, for the sake of listening to what he called "a little bit" of Corelli,—Handel,—Geminiani,—Scarlatti, &c.; from whose works my own peculiar taste led me to select and play different pieces without book, in my own peculiar way. A very classical taste for music prevailed at that time amongst some of the senior members of the university; and many were the private concerts at which I had an opportunity, which was not lost upon me, of highly improving my taste for the compositions of the old masters.

Added to the pleasure which the Professor took in my music, he was gratified in lending such aid to the cultivation of my intellect, as his own well stored and accomplished mind rendered it very easy and natural for him to do, without any definite purpose or effort to instruct me. He saw me as a young enthusiastic creature, full of dangerous power, but I believe I must add in my own behalf, full also of a thirst for genuine truth and beauty, and a capacity for rapidly discriminating and properly appropriating it, on which nothing in the shape of valuable remark was thrown away. Thus, in talking with us as we sat by the fire (and though made up of such incongruous materials, we were a good audience) he would amuse us with anecdotes and remarks upon books and people, which, in respect to the former, usually had the effect of my next morning making an application to some friend, through whose aid I could immediately procure from the Public library the work he had quoted. He lent me many books also from his own library, and always the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews; which were works of great use and influence in directing my inquiries to valuable subjects of study. In short, in a way quite curious from its conciseness, simplicity, and natural emanation from the course of circumstances, he did all, I may truly say, that ever was done in an external way for my mental cultivation. Much was not wanted where a hint sufficed; and when two or three

careless unconscious words of quotation had the effect, perhaps, of introducing me to months of study.

All this however, though good, was merely intellectual; and, except as it nourished what good sense I might possess, was more influential in cultivating a sentiment of pride and self-sufficiency, than any more amiable tendencies. My father, who, as an Irishman, was, of course, exceedingly keen in a knowledge of character, (I might rather say in a knowledge of spirits, for his faculty of perception went deeper than the superficies of character) and who was shrewd enough to discern that although the Professor's conversation was addressed to them, it was rather to my mind, than to his or my mother's, that he looked for the full comprehension and enjoyment of his discourse, grew more and more indisposed to regard me with kindness.

As my natural disposition to let myself out in words, (though seldom active in his presence) began about this time to take a literary tendency, it generated, I believe, a double feeling in his heart, of delight and dislike, which, in a more kindly nature, would have led probably, to the predominance of the agreeable one; but which with him, poor soul! blighted and disappointed as he was in his expectations of comfort in me, conducted him straight to a morbid suspicion and jealousy of my fancied superiority, which, though it did not break out in language, lurked painfully in his manner.

It was in this way that I passed the period of my life from nineteen to thirty. It is an obvious question on the part of my reader, whether during this interval, I had no opportunity of changing my destiny by the usual chances of matrimony which fall to the lot of most young women. I had such chances, but not from those I could love; — and I am thankful to say, that although there could be few cases in which such an opportunity of altering a domestic lot would have been more desirable than in mine, I never, upon any occasion, for a single moment entertained a wish to marry, merely to obtain a change of circumstances; — on the contrary, I think I could sooner have died than have united myself to any man who had not the full possession of my heart. But though I did not marry, it does not follow that I should not in the matter of ardent but hopeless attachment, drink to the dregs that bitter cup which but few women escape at least from tasting. It may be taken for granted, that the overwhelming influence " which links to the soul one thought alone, and that a thought of anguish," was not likely to be wanting in such a nature as mine; — and being taken for granted, we may let that subject drop.

I have said that my parents were getting old, and retiring from society when I was just entering into it; which, of course, very much restricted my enjoyments in that way; — still, my musical abilities kept me in some request as a visitor at different

parties, and I had thus enough of recreation to satisfy me. The circumstances of my destiny tended to drive me to inward, not outward resources; and I think the chief, and I am sure, the best part of my satisfaction with my lot, arose from the ample means it afforded me for thought and reflection. I passed a great part of my time in my own room; a much greater, indeed, than I ought to, and than I should have done, for I loved to be with my mother, but that it had grown into an unhappy instinct with me to get as much as possible out of my father's way.

It will appear inevitable, I suppose, that being so much of a reader, I should also be touched with a desire to try my hand as a writer. My first efforts of this sort in the form of two little tales, though printed, and secretly published, by the aid of an acquaintance of mine much connected with books and authors, who had married one of my very intimate friends, were so hastily and crudely concocted (my usual vehemence being overwhelming under a desire to see myself in print) that, as Hume says of the first edition of his history, they "fell dead-born from the press;" and I believe scarcely anybody beyond the publisher and myself knew anything about them. I showed them after they were published, to the Professor; who gave me very wholesome advice on the subject;—spoke highly of my productions as the efforts of a girl making things out as well as she could in solitude;—but

counselled my being quiet and silent about the matter. Any assistance he could be of in future, in the way of reading my manuscript before it was sent to a publisher, he said that he should be pleased to render me. Indeed, he urged it as essential to my success, that some other and more experienced person than myself should look it over.

Thus encouraged, I set myself to a better regulated way of writing; and after the lapse of two or three years, my occupation being suspended during that time by the frequent pauses which I had sense enough to know would be beneficial to its success, I completed a work in three volumes, which, in pursuance of his advice and offer to assist me, I submitted to the Professor's judgment.

Great was my dismay, and not small my displeasure, when he had had it a fortnight or so, to find, on walking home with him one night from a party, and eagerly asking how he liked it, that he had put it aside in a drawer till he had finished delivering his lectures; "when," he said, "he should be better able to attend to it as he wished." "Your lectures, Professor!—why you will be a month about them." "Thereabouts," he replied. "Then I am sure I wont wait all that time. I will send for it back to-morrow." "If you do, you wont get it," was his answer; and little regarding the evaporation of my disappointment and displeasure, he trotted me along at his usual pace of some five miles an hour, and good humouredly

wishing me good night, he left me at my father's gate,—so annoyed and angry, that had the manuscript been within my reach, it was quite possible I might have ended the matter by throwing it into the fire.

The stipulated time for his reading it came in due course; and occasionally, when I encountered him in my walks, while he was engaged on it, he would stop a moment, and speak encouragingly, and say, "as far as I have gone, it does you credit." At length I missed seeing him for a week; an unusual thing, since, in every street of the place, you were scarcely more sure of encountering pavement and houses, than of meeting him flying from one side of the way to another, as this and that person to whom he had a word to say, crossed his path. It happened, however, that I had not in this interval met with him anywhere. At length, he one day caught sight of me, and coming up, he took my arm in his, and led me on a little way. "I have nearly done your book," said he;—"it is good,—very good;—and he smiled with affectionate earnestness as he added, "now don't be impatient;—don't be hurrying the thing into publication. I have seldom read a work of the kind, of which I think better. Be quiet about it; be advised,—be guided by me." He was then off, and "my bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne;" for the manuscript would not now be consigned to oblivion, or burnt in a pet,—but would be published, and

probably under very good auspices, if the Professor took it under his patronage. There was one feature in the case that was saddening; and that was the impossibility of cheering my parents with a knowledge of any good fortune that might attend me as an author. It was impossible; not only because I knew too well my father's strange twists and turns of feeling, not to be assured that however proud and delighted he would be (and he would have been both in no ordinary degree) with my success, yet it would inevitably have led to such occasional taunts on the score of its unduly puffing me up, as I should have resented in a way to produce incalculable misery to us all. Added to this, the Professor with a prudence which made a strong ingredient in his character, had enjoined me not to speak of the matter to any one, till time had stamped it with success or failure; and for my poor father to have known it, would have been to set a death-warrant upon all privacy on the subject. He would not indeed, have talked to me about it; but he would have talked to everybody else. It may be thought that I might have told my mother;—but she always suffered so much from the anger of my father, if he discovered that she was in possession of any piece of intelligence that was kept back from him, that she had often desired me never to inform her of anything that she was not at liberty to communicate to him.

At length the Professor's verdict was given in a

little note which, two or three days after the interview to which I have alluded, he put into my hand, as I was bidding him good night, at a party where we had spent the evening together. The opening sentence of it was this:—

"Dear Miss ——

"It would be very improper of me not to tell you, that I have been affected during the latter pages of your novel, in a way that I cannot describe. I read on and on, with the tears continually in my eyes; and at last I ended in a sort of agony. I cannot expect that you will affect others in this way; for there are certain chords that vibrate in my mind, and those you have laid your hand upon." Then, with a few words suggestive of the steps I was to take towards improving and finally fitting it for publication, he concluded.

There was a story current, of the Professor's having in early life been the victim of hopeless love, and, in consequence of that disappointment, remaining a confirmed bachelor, which probably had sufficient truth in it to account for the expression respecting "certain chords in his mind," as well as for the deep and unusual way in which the perusal of my manuscript had impressed him.

It looks so like a trick to attract notice to the work, that I unwillingly specify its title; but it seems due to the natural curiosity of the reader to state that it was called "The Favourite of Nature;"

a title given to it by the Professor; that which I had adopted being objected to by the publisher as trivial and unattractive.

The publication of this book,* which, through the Professor's kind influence, was dedicated to, and brought out under the patronage and favour of Mrs. Joanna Baillie, was so successful, that a third edition of it was called for in the course of a few months. A "sough" began to arise in my native place that I was the author of it; but in London, I believe, it was for some time attributed to Lady Dacre; so at least I learned from her Ladyship's letter to the Professor on the subject; which, with several from other parties, he was pleased in sending to me, as encouraging and favourable testimony in its behalf.

I never avowed myself its author during the lifetime of my parents; who remained ignorant of it to their death. They both however read it; for I was in the habit of laying books of entertainment in my poor father's way; not only because I was really glad to furnish him with all the small means of recreation which I could, but also that it was a prodigious help in keeping off disquietude, to put him under the influence of an interesting novel; and through the unwearied kindness of some of my intimate friends who had the power of supplying me with them, there was scarcely any work of cele-

* In 1821.

brity in that way, that I could not give him the reading of.

Curiously affecting was it to me, to watch my dear mother, and steal a look at her, from the piano (at which I was generally seated for the greater part of most evenings), in order that I might gather what impression the perusal of my book made upon her.

"Poor thing!" she softly exclaimed to herself, as once she laid it down to wipe her eyes.

I always thought, and still think, that my father detected me by the internal evidence of the book, as its author. He sat to the reading of it with earnest and fixed attention; but every now and then some caustic remark about the heroine's character, which he denounced as "very futile," inclined me to think that his morbid habit of being resolved to find fault, was stimulated by much the same cause as usual.

It was a triumphant era in my history which the successful publication of that book produced; and it not only brought me fame, but profit also. Mr. Whittaker, who, on the Professor's recommendation, had undertaken the publication on the terms of his encountering the risk and dividing with me the profits, had written me word a few months after its first appearance, that he hoped to hand me a hundred pounds at the ensuing Christmas, as my share of the profits;—which he did do. I scarcely think that on that occasion I could have refrained from

making my dear mother a partaker in my pleasure; but before that time arrived, most unexpectedly, by a sudden seizure, that beloved parent, the one stay and solace of my home existence, was taken from me.

Such an exigence! such a demand as it made upon all that I possessed of interior strength, I had never yet experienced! I could only turn for help to God; and pray to Him to succour and support me, and aid me to do my duty to my poor, bereaved, unhappy father!

How well do I remember (can I ever forget it!) the morning after my mother's death, which took place suddenly at midnight—when I rose desolate and broken-hearted from my sleepless pillow, longing, yet dreading to go and offer to my father the consolation, which, owing to the dismay and confusion produced by the night's affliction, I had as yet been incapable of extending to him. How keen is the recollection of the feelings with which, as soon as I was dressed, I hastened down to the parlour where I knew he was sitting. I can see even yet, the mournful shake of his head, with which without speaking, he noticed my entrance. I can recall with little less than the emotion I then experienced, the gushing tears, the deep, deep sobs of anguish, with which I hastened up and kissed him, and, as well as I could, gave utterance to the words "My dear father—I will do all I can to make you happy."

It was enough! The pent up channel of his strong affections at once broke forth in expressions of surprised delight; and out of the bosom of our deepest woe, the Giver of all good enriched us with a gleam of comfort, such as we had never yet been the means of imparting to each other.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was not long that my poor father and I were thrown together in our new circumstances. His health had been declining for some time; and in the course of a few months he followed my mother to the grave.

It was not in his nature, nor in mine, nor in the nature of the things that belonged to our position, to prevent its being one of much and painful embarrassment, though we both did our best to ameliorate it. So great is the power of habit, and more particularly a habit of feeling, that scarcely any influence will suffice to counteract its sure and steady dominion over the mind in which it has once secured a place. Still, I had the great and cheering satisfaction of knowing that I was of use and value to him; and that though his inveterate custom of turning the worst side of his nature upon his domestic ties, was not, and could not, be eradicated, it was in a measure subdued; and that however he carried matters towards myself, he spoke of me to

others as the prop and solace of his bereaved and sorrowful condition.

I was about thirty-two years of age, when, by his death, I was left entirely to my own disposal, with a sufficiency of means for all the comfort and enjoyment that was good for me. I possessed a competence in the way of inheritance; and as I was now pursuing the path to fortune which my success as a novelist had opened up to me, I had an amplitude of resources which precluded all anxiety as to pecuniary matters. Mr. Whittaker had purchased the copyright of the "Favourite of Nature," and of "Osmond," which succeeded it, for five hundred pounds; and at my father's death I had another work in hand, called "Trials," for which, on its completion, he paid me two hundred and fifty pounds more. All this was very pleasant, and made the occupation of great importance; but the simplicity and charm of it was dead and buried under the grovelling desires, the panting eagerness, the hateful appetite for money, which so easy an acquisition of it excited in my nature. The delightful world of fancy which I had loved for its own sake whilst writing the "Favourite of Nature," the calm and useful reflections with which I then took time to enrich my work, and the wholesome pause of a few weeks to let it cool, and to refresh myself in order that I might pursue it with greater advantage, were wholly gone. My time was now put up at a premium, and so were my words and sentences; a

view of the case which naturally generated haste and driving to put them together; and a counting of lines and pages to see how much of the commodity I had got ready for the market. These were virtually the motives that governed my exertions, though I did not perceive it then to be the case. Yet I remember occasionally asking the Professor if there was not a hazard of my out-writing myself, by producing my works in so rapid a succession?

He thought people might bear with one about every year or so, was his reply; and for four or five years I supplied the public with a fresh novel. My hand was then arrested, and the pursuit concluded, by a train of circumstances, which, as directly leading to results that bore a potent influence upon the residue of my days, as far at least as I have yet passed, or expect to pass it, I must now revert to.

I remained for the greater part of the first year after my father's death, in the house he had inhabited, and which had been the only home I had yet known. I lived there in comparative retirement; and very solemn and sad were often my thoughts and feelings, when I missed the familiar forms with whom I had been so long and so constantly associated in that now deserted dwelling. Even the uncongenial temper and ways of my poor old father, I thought that I could have been glad again to bear, for the sake of feeling that I belonged to him.

Now, I belonged to nobody; and bitter was the thought of my isolation.

Poor fathers and mothers! often so lightly set by whilst here,—how surely, except where hearts are strangely hardened, are they remembered with a regret which the fulfilment of duty, or its neglect, renders soothing or agonizing. Mine was at that time of a mixed nature. I was conscious that I had not been what I ought to have been to either of my parents; but I was more disposed to dwell upon the mistakes on their part which had so greatly tended to render me a source of trouble to them, than upon my own want of submission and obedience. I had not lived sufficiently long under the teaching of experience, to take the full and comprehensive view of the case, which I have since been able to do.

The winter passed away, and with the return of spring, my spirits regained their usual tone. As the estate had then to be sold, it became a question where I was to set up my rest. I had arrived at an age when youth was over, but not danger; especially to a person just dawning into notice, and beginning to drink of the intoxicating potion of popularity; a person too, so alive to sensation, and so much its victim as myself. I was quite aware of the peril of my position, and which being, as I believed, rather increased by my place of residence, I thought that it would be advisable to seek for a permanent one elsewhere. I had friends in Lon-

don who wished to receive me as an inmate of their family, and I rather leaned towards a purpose of becoming so.

"You had better be somebody here, than nobody there," said the Professor; with whom I talked over my, as yet, undefined intentions; for though not properly my counsellor on matters of so personal and intimate a character, he had a way of throwing off hints about things of daily and domestic life, which, concise and careless as they were, and dropped in a way that plainly enough said, "these are matters out of my ken,"—were full of wisdom and practical usefulness.

On the whole then, and as a step more consonant to my wishes than any other I could take, I resolved to remain in my native place, though in another dwelling.

How wonderful are the results that spring from apparently the most insignificant causes! Where is the thoughtful man or woman to be found, of a sufficiently advanced stage of existence, who, in reviewing their lives, could not write a volume were they to detail the seemingly trivial circumstances, so easy to have avoided, so strange to have submitted to, which were yet so influential in their destiny, that every part of it could be traced to their occurrence?

It was so with me at this juncture. Had I taken any other abode,—had I but been successful in my search elsewhere, my whole future fate had been

totally different. But things happened well, though strangely; and I have never ceased to bless the Providence that guided me to a residence under the roof of Mrs. S——; a lady who was, in the largest sense of the term, a high religious professor. As the daughter of one, and the sister of three clergymen, she had formerly occupied a far higher station in society than that of keeping a day school; an employment, in which, assisted by three of her daughters, I found her engaged at my first introduction to her. I had known her by reputation some time as a fervent follower of Mr. Simeon's; and when, after vain inquiries here and there for a suitable residence, an intimate friend, who had children at her school, suggested to me that Mrs. S—— had apartments to let, I immediately repudiated her house as an abode.

"Just think," said I, "of her trying to convert me! and if she did not do this, of her haranguing me on the iniquity of my going out to parties two or three times a week, and coming home at midnight or later!" a case of frequent occurrence; for after I got into notice as a successful author, my sphere of visiting was so rapidly extending, that few were the evenings I passed alone.

"Oh, as for that, replied my friend, "you need make no farther acquaintance than you like with her; and as your maid will sit up for you when you are out, what can it signify to her how late you stay? But to make all sure in this respect, sup-

pose you tell her your plans of life, and stipulate for no interruption to them on her part." On this way of putting the question, I agreed to wait on Mrs. S—— and talk matters over.

I found her extremely pleasant, sociable, and good-humoured; quite as reasonable as I could wish, and a great deal more so than I expected, touching the tender point of my visiting as often, and staying as late upon my visits as I liked. I may shortly say, that I took her apartments, and established myself in her house.

It was at a time of year when the University being about to disperse for the long vacation, the season of visiting was pretty well over. Still I had sufficient of it upon my hands, to keep me so much engaged during the first three weeks of my residence under her roof, that I had exchanged only a few words of civil greeting with her when we met accidentally on the stairs. At the end of that time, finding myself with a vacant evening before me, I sent my maid about seven o'clock, with my compliments, and I should be glad of her company to take tea with me if she were disengaged. She returned me a very civil answer, that she had drunk tea two hours before, but if I would accept of her company after I had finished my own, she would be very happy to spend an hour with me; a proposal which of course I accepted.

As our conversation was exclusively on the subject of religion, it being the only one on which she

ever spoke, I may as well give a brief sketch of what at this time were my own sentiments on that important point; if any I could be said to possess that partook of a marked and distinct character. But I scarcely think that I can better describe them, than by saying that I had a deep, loving confidence and faith in God, as a Being full of wisdom and compassion, and who, through every trial of suffering or temptation with which he permitted his creatures to be exercised, had only their ultimate happiness and everlasting blessedness in view.

As for the doctrines of Divine wrath, eternal punishment, reprobation, election, and the rest of it, I had doubtless heard the names, but I knew nothing of the nature, as preached and taught by Calvinistic divines. The ministry I had been accustomed in my youth (and till within a few years, when things altered for the better) to attend, was of the sleepy, vapid kind, which, some five and forty years ago, usually emanated from those sleek, cosey looking members of the University, who once a week officiated in the parish church of some little benefice in the town belonging to their college; and who, when in the pulpit, always seemed as if they would have been more natural, truthful, and in every sense of the word, more at their ease, over a bottle of port in the combination room. Right jocund gentlemen many of them were; skilful at a rubber, not unapt at flirtation, *au fait* at the news and politics of the day, and acceptable everywhere

as efficient *aids-de-camp* in tea-table intercourse. I dare say there is scarcely a genuine specimen of the class left. It was rapidly lessening in numbers at the time of which I am speaking; but I had from my earliest years, under a succession of such pastors, been so lulled into apathy on the subject of sermons, as rarely to consider it worth while to make an effort to attend to them, even when they were of a superior order, and delivered in a more spiritual way.

Thus much premised, it will, I hope, seem less strange than it otherwise would, that in haranguing on the two great doctrines of original sin and the atonement, which, under one modification or another, formed the whole sum and substance of a discourse that lasted till midnight, Mrs. S—— should have brought such novel subjects before my thoughts, that I more than once expressed the wonder with which they filled me. She had a ready solution for my ignorance, in their never having been preached at the place of worship I attended; for in her estimation, the ministry of Mr. Simeon, and some two or three more, monopolized all the truth, or, as she called it, "the gospel," that was to be had in the place.

"I had no idea you made so much use of the Saviour," was, I remember, one of the expressions of surprise that escaped me, and which occasioned her to clap her hands with joy, as with glistening eyes she replied,

"That's it, my dear lady! that's just the whole of the case. A sinner and a Saviour!"

These words on both sides, I distinctly remember at the interval of nearly thirty years; but I retain too general an impression of the interview, to attempt at deducing from it any sort of faithful dialogue.

I may shortly say, that she left me deeply and profitably impressed with a new view of myself, as a creature "born in sin, and shapen in iniquity." The doctrine of original corruption could have been addressed to no one more ready to receive it than myself. It was a doctrine which, till then, I had held in such a loose, vague sort of way, and under so many qualifications and restrictions, as virtually to reduce it to a nullity; but now brought home to me with the illustration of text upon text (for, almost without a figure, it might be affirmed of Mrs. S——, that "she had the Bible at her fingers' ends,") and confirmed by the voice of the "Amen, the faithful and true witness," in my own heart,—I saw as by a light from heaven, that it was a doctrine which revealed the one great disease and plague spot of the human race. With respect to the remedy, I can remember the exact words I made use of, after Mrs. S—— had laboured the point of assuring me, and had confirmed her assurances with the most appropriate texts, that all we had to do, under a sense of guilt and pollution, was "to wash and be clean."

"But how wash, Mrs. S——? What do the words imply? I cannot understand them except in a spiritual and figurative sense."

"Of course," she said, "they could not be understood in any other;" but ever as I pressed her to give me her meaning in some definite and specific terms, she answered me with texts which just as much required to be interpreted, as that on which I was enquiring.

The outward blood shed on the cross at Jerusalem, was the remedy to which all her answers, and all the Scriptures which she quoted, applied.—A spiritual Redeemer,—and a holy, internal redemption, I could understand;—but this mixing of an external and material object with it, perplexed me in a painful degree. On the whole however, I obtained great benefit from our interview, in the clear contemplation to which it brought me of the corruption of human nature. I saw that I had been greatly too lenient in only supposing that it had its weaknesses and infirmities. I could perceive that, whilst possessing a capability of morality and virtue, (though greatly indebted for this, to the assistance of pride and vain glory) it was the slave of self-love, and an alien to the pure and holy nature of a God of all perfection. I can truly say I longed to "lay hold upon eternal life;" a scriptural precept, which amongst others, she suggested as a command to cleave to Christ. I can now distinctly understand, that, so far as her conceptions of redemption

meant any real purification and cleansing of heart, she must have arrived at the same result to which I have myself been conducted, and where I now rest; and where, as I believe, everybody must rest who clearly discerns, and ardently desires, to be delivered from the power of internal evil;—for, when we avoid the debateable and circuitous ground of religious creeds and systems, and come straight to the practical point where every creed and system that ever was composed or compiled must eventually centre,—we find all genuine faith to consist in the conscious and influential belief of the individual in the presence and agency of the Spirit of God within the soul. Every external object of belief must be brought *inward*, and spiritualized and simplified into this;—or what is it? Give it any other name or nature than an ever-living, ever-acting principle of confidence in God, founded on a *knowledge*, not a *notion*, of his nature of boundless mercy, and ineffable, unfathomable love and wisdom, revealed by the Spirit of Truth to the soul,—and, again I ask, what is it?

I have said that I can now understand that, in so far as the religion of Mrs. S—— had any truth and comfort in it, it must, when stripped of all extrinsic mixture and confusion, have been the same as that in which I now rest; but, as she then propounded it to me, it brought me no rest, nor anything else but mystery and incongruity.

"Only believe;" was her unvarying reply to my

expressions of doubt and difficulty. The obvious necessity of possessing a distinct knowledge of the object of faith, to make it any faith at all, I did not at the time observe or remark to her upon; for her ardour and delight in seeing that she had awakened some reflection in me, and the undoubtedly genuine nature of her feelings, impressed me so much, that I really almost longed to be of one mind with her. The facility of the mode in which we were made righteous, and on which she descanted so triumphantly, struck me also as singularly desirable.

"It seems too good to be true;" I remember, was one of my remarks upon it;—and one which occasioned her again to clap her hands with joy, and exclaim,

"That's it, my dear lady! It is the very easiness of the work that makes its glory. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

"But then Mrs. S——, is there nothing for me to do?"

"Nothing.—You are not to defile the Lord's work by mixing it with *your* filthy rags of righteousness."

"Strange this!" I thought; when I mused over the matter by myself. I could not make it out, but I certainly wished to do so; for so easy a method of being delivered from guilt, had a great charm in it.

I need scarcely say that this interview was followed by many more; in all of which she pro-

nounced me to be in a *growing* state;—and, so far as my head was filling with notions and doctrines, I suppose I might be advancing into a new phase of faith. At all events, I made rapid progress into that stage of it which consisted in decrying the purposes and pursuits of everybody who did not think with me; and I had a grim, dreary satisfaction, whenever I was out of humour with any of my former associates, in thinking that I was in a much safer condition than they were. Still, with all the latent bitterness of my own nature, and the fiery Calvinism of Mrs. S—— to aid it in the denunciatory way, I confess I could not, without great uneasiness, contemplate the everlasting perdition of some of my dear old comrades, as inevitable. Some five or six of them, I must, at all hazards, labour to convert; and as one of the oldest and most esteemed, I took the Professor in hand.

What arguments we had, again and again, when he dropped in for half an hour in the evening! and how well do I recollect, on one occasion, when he came to meet a lady who was a mutual friend of us both, but who having married and settled at a distance, was then only on a visit to her friends, what a miserable, self-reproving creature, my propensity to indulge in these theological harangues, occasioned me to be. Of course I never talked of anything *but* theology in those days; and as there was only my friend (whom I wished also to convert) present, in addition to the Professor, I plunged into the subject wholly unrestrained. Neither of my

companions would have anything to say to my Calvinism; which the Professor opposed with quotations from Paley. Paley, of course, I held in extreme contempt, as an evangelical doctor; scarcely acknowledging him to be a believer at all; and certainly not one in the sense which Mrs. S—— had taught me to attach to the term.

The Professor, who was an ardent admirer of Paley, reproved my observations as extreme, not to say absurd; and added that the only objection which *my party* could make to Paley, was that he was too sensible for them. I got excessively angry, and, in the heat of the moment, not perceiving the caricature which my vehemence produced, I began to talk of Christian meekness and humility as evidences of Gospel faith, of which a man, built up as Paley was, in the pride of intellect, could not even comprehend the meaning. I set against the merits of his sermons, on which the Professor pronounced a high eulogium, the divine beatitudes in the sermon on the mount; repeating them by heart, and stopping every now and then to ask if Paley had a sentiment in all his works like this or that? More particularly I paused at "Blessed are the meek,"—Was Paley meek? Was there anything indicative of humility in any page of any sermon that he ever wrote? At which interrogation, *not* very gently delivered, the Professor leaving me to carry on my queries as best I liked, took up a writing case that was at hand, and quietly sitting down at the table,

he wrote a letter, doubled it up, directed, sealed and put it in his pocket, with the intention I suppose, of dropping it in the post in his way home; then putting on his gown, and saying to my friend a few words expressive of his wish to see her before she quitted the place, he shook hands with me, bid us both good night, and was off.

This calm way of resisting my excitement, effectually arrested its force; and I scarcely knew how to be angry in meeting with a smile from my friend, as I said to her, "The Professor has had enough of it."

"Perhaps it *was* a little incongruous," she quietly observed, "that, in expatiating upon the subject of meekness, you should be quite so much excited."

I was subdued enough for the rest of the evening; and the reflections to which I was left, on the departure of my friend, tended greatly to increase that subjugation. I felt, with painful humiliation, that I had manifested nothing so distinctly, and convinced my hearers of nothing so forcibly, as of the intemperate and ungoverned character of my own feelings. My thoughts were most harassing, most degrading; yet amidst their distressing pressure, a holy, yet evanescent sentiment was also present, which, in the depth of my being, gave a meek testimony to a better way; and which prompted me to tears, and earnest supplications that I might find it.

CHAPTER XIII.

AS I was interested, and, after a fashion, instructed by the conversation of Mrs. S—— I became sufficiently attached to her to find pleasure in my residence at her house. My apartments and mode of life were perfectly distinct from hers; but scarcely a day passed, in which, either at my coming in or going out, I did not drop into her room, and, whilst she was starching, and ironing, or cooking the dinner (for her daughters carried on the business of the school) pursue my spiritual enquiries.

I also descanted long and largely, upon my personal condition of trial and temptation, and my want of a stable resting place of hope and comfort. If she had done nothing else for me, she had effectually disturbed my peace of mind; but, as she said, and with great truth, that it was a false peace, (if peace indeed, I had ever known in the interior of my heart) there was nothing cut to waste in scattering it to the winds.

"What hast thou to do with peace, in drinking the waters of Sihor?" she would say.

And here, as it occurs to me that the readers of my former work,* if they recollect the sketch there given of Mrs. Lane, will now be at no loss to guess the original of it, I would observe, and the few who may remember Mrs. S—— will, I am sure, confirm the observation, that, although that character has been condemned in some of the reviews, as even "a gross caricature," the fact is, that it is perfectly tame and spiritless by the side of the original.

I dared not then, nor do I now dare, to attempt any extended detail of the extraordinary quotations from Scripture, and the grotesque application of them, which she contrived to interweave in her discourse. I am fully persuaded that any representation which I could give of her, as she is now before my mind's eye, turning the sausages in the frying-pan,—or folding collars and handkerchiefs,—or ironing them,—whilst in the midst of such of these employments as happened to be going on, 'twas "many a holy text around she strewed,"—I am convinced, I say, that any picture I could paint of her thus engaged, would be weak and ineffective compared with the raciness and spirit of the actual scene.

It was a most incongruous affair, beyond all question; but it was lively and encouraging to an anxious enquirer. Not a particle of denunciation had she for me so long as I was her patient listener,

* Visiting my Relations.

and promising disciple, and, by the real disquietude and conflict of my spirit, inspired her with a good hope that I should eventually, as she said, "come out, and be separate, and touch no more the unclean thing." At present she considered me as in a transition state; though, truth to say, it was a very equivocal one in respect to the "coming out" from the intellectual, and highly accomplished circle which now constituted the orbit wherein I revolved. As long, however, as I anchored in sight of the beacon she exhibited to me, she felt sure that I should not drift out, and be wholly lost on the dangerous ocean that surrounded me.

Never was there a more cheerful ministry than hers for docile hearers; and I *was* docile as a hearer, though, as yet, not much to be reported of as a doer. I was also fond of hearing her talk for talking's sake, even if the subject of her loquacity had not been of so stimulating a kind; for she was a woman of great natural powers of mind, though rather of the imaginative cast. She was fond of poetry, and might be said to have Shakespeare almost as much by heart as the Scriptures; and a quotation from the poet was quite as prompt, and scarcely less often made use of, than one from the Prophets. This, I believe, was an arrow from her quiver which she levelled at the peculiarity of my case; and because she desired to become all things to me, in order to win me over to the right (that is to *her*) way of thinking. As she, no doubt, con-

sidered me at that time, to be more accessible on the side of taste and fancy than of conscience, she directed her artillery upon that quarter.

I well remember one of her Shakesperian quotations which was so apt and striking, that I repeated it to the Professor; who, like myself, had overlooked it in the great poet's writings; and greatly was he, as I had been, impressed with the sentiment in "Measure for Measure" which, whilst one day setting before me the extent of divine love and mercy evinced in the work of human redemption, she thus quoted;

> "Why, all the souls that are, were forfeit once,
> And he that might the 'vantage best have ta'en,
> Found out the remedy."

When, to the vivacity and variety of her mental endowments, Mrs. S—— united great evenness of temper, and gaiety of heart, it will not be thought surprising that I should have derived real pleasure from her society.

Her daughters partook of her temperament, and, together with their mother, were simple, cheerful creatures, more unsophisticated, and unconscious of the world and all its details, than it had ever yet been my lot to come in contact with. They were industrious in their employment, contented with their lot, and kindly disposed towards one another. There was a kind of indifference in respect to every thing and everybody out of their own domestic circle, which gave them a peculiarity that did not

displease, though it rather puzzled me, to understand. After-events enabled me to trace it to the operation of pride; a sentiment which, in its largest development, they one and all possessed. It is one however, which works well in producing steadiness of purpose, and constancy of attachment.

It was this steadiness in adhering to a purpose and a point, which, even when applied to erroneous designs, has something dignified in it, that excited my regard, and increased my respect for them; not, alas, because it assimilated with,—but because it was so much in contrast to, my own restlessness, and consequent infirmity of purpose. I cannot say how it is with others, but I perceive something in my interior nature, which always inclines me to reverence, and to covet those qualities in which I am the most deficient. The very terms that describe such qualities, I have sometimes found sufficient to elicit a feeling that seems to be akin to their nature. Meekness of wisdom, patience, stillness, humility, often have these words been to me, in themselves, a prayer and a sermon; and never have I found myself in association with calm, firm, self-controlled individuals, but I have felt disposed almost to reverence them for their superiority to myself.

It was this sort of superiority, which, greatly as it perplexed me to account for it, rendered the society of these young people, a sort of refuge to me. Their few simple words of surprise at any of my

erratic impulses, as, perplexed and unhappy, and supposing that change of scene might help me, I sometimes announced a sudden purpose of going here—there—anywhere, to-morrow, or, at the latest the day after; their plain, steady counsels to be still, strengthened by some apt word of scripture, were inexpressibly useful and valuable to one who always seemed safest and wisest when brought under any body's care and guidance, rather than her own.

The young girls themselves, to whom my impetuosity and worldliness afforded a never ceasing source of wonder and amusement, became on their part devotedly attached to me. "Here's dearest Ma'am!" was their usual exclamation at the sight of me; whilst "dearest ma'am's" motley, but very real disquietudes on the subject of her visitings and their pleasures, and her conscience and its pains, presented materials for a confession, on which, in their plain direct manner, they had generally a word to say, that, for the time, served as a quietus.

It becomes proper for me now to state, that, much as my mind was disturbed by the ministrations of Mrs. S———, and great as was the perplexity of purpose as to my habits and pursuits which she had occasioned me, the tone of her exhortations was of somewhat too low a character, too deficient in wisdom, and too much wanting in delicacy of feeling, to assimilate sufficiently well with my views of religion, to incline me wholly to succumb to its influence. But there was another

influence at this time in operation, which had far more potency of effect upon me, than any with which I had yet been approached; and this was the ministry of Mr. Simeon, to which until this time I was entirely a stranger, although my father was a regular attendant at his church every Sunday and Thursday evening for some years. I do not believe that this was from any particular pleasure or benefit that he conceived himself to derive there; but the fact was, that from the time (some fourteen years before his death) of his having been the subject of a paralytic seizure, he had, under natural apprehensions of the result, been very properly anxious to prepare himself for it, by availing himself of all the religious aid and consolation which fell in his way. Nothing would have induced him to quit his parish church when service was performed there; but being closed on the Sunday evening, he resorted to that of Mr. Simeon with most unswerving constancy. He seldom made any comment to my mother (he never commented on anything to me) as to the effect which his attendance at it produced upon his mind; and when he did drop a word, it was generally to say, "how very odd Simeon was to-night!" so that the little which he did manifest in the way of opinion, could not be said to be of a very favourable kind.

A much more vivid testimony to the merits of Mr. Simeon, was given in his kitchen every week, by an honest, humble peasant, living at Trumping-

ton, whom he fell in with in his walks; and whom, on entering into conversation with, he found to walk two miles every Sunday to hear Mr. Simeon, contentedly going without his dinner, for the sake of the spiritual refreshment which the sermon afforded him. My father was pleased with the man, who was, in truth, a worthy person in his line of life, and desired him to call at our house when church was over, and take his dinner there. For fourteen years after that time, "Master Starn," which was his mode of appellation with the servants, was never missing at his Sunday dinner in our kitchen; and never, as I was informed by an old servant who had lived with us from my childhood, without his remarking at his first entrance, "what a *sarment* we have had sure-*ly!*" a remark, I am sorry to say, not quite so reverently repeated by old Martha, or commented upon by me, as, from the depths of his heart, it had been uttered by "Master Starn."

The very name of Mr. Simeon was at that time, and had been from my earliest youth, associated in my mind with absurdity, and perhaps something worse. I had a very near relation who was a fellow of Mr. Simeon's college, whose wicked narrations touching that good man's rather grotesque peculiarities, had greatly tended to nourish such ideas, as so far as I had any on the subject, rendered it only a ridiculous one to me. But the truth is, I never thought about it at all, except as

occasionally, an agreeable friend proposed to drop in for an hour, when I generally said, "let it be Thursday or Sunday evening;" a request which arose from my habit of feeling more unrestrained and joyous in my father's absence, and consequently helping others also to feel so.

This was all that I knew of Mr. Simeon, when Mrs. S——— strongly urged me "just to go and hear him." "There can be no harm in that, my dear lady," she said. I did not reply that I thought there would be the harm of my getting laughed at if it were known; but I could not help imagining to myself——and——seeing me streaming out with the rest of the congregation of Trinity Church, and the result of such a sight! It happened, however, that one Sunday evening, not long after my first interview with Mrs. S———, finding myself alone and listless, it occurred to me that let what might come of it, I would go to Trinity Church. I stole in there at the little side door, and asked to be shown to the seat of a friend, which was the one my father had always occupied. It was a calm, sweet evening in the month of May, and my feelings, always accessible to the influence of music, were melted into a melancholy that was more tender than painful, as, during the opening hymn, which was very devotionally, and very beautifully sung on the part of the congregation, I remembered my poor old father, and thought how much more than possible it was, that in the very place I occupied, he had

spread before the Lord, a heart oppressed with sources of disquietude, with which I was not remotely, nor slightly associated. The reminiscence, and the thoughts it awakened, were fraught with an earnestness of regret and contrition, which well prepared me to benefit by whatever of good, Mr. Simeon might have to propose; but still I scarcely expected him to excite me to more than a respectful attention to his discourse. I was wholly unprepared for the touching,—the heart-appealing power, with which the fervour of his manner, and the deep devotional tone of his opening prayer, affected me. It might be, and I suppose it was, that some peculiar spiritual exercise was upon him; for never afterwards was the effect he produced upon me so potent as at that time.

"Is this the man," I said to myself, "that I have presumptuously derided, and ignorantly held in contempt?"

Nothing, during the whole of his discourse (which was on the use and necessity of trial and affliction) was so distinctly present with me, as regret that I should have lived for so many years within reach of the privilege of hearing him, and have passed it by with insolent contempt.

Great was the clapping of hands, and triumphant the congratulations with which, on my return home, I was received by Mrs. S—— and her daughters, who had seen me at church with delighted surprise, not knowing of my intention to go; for, in-

deed, I knew it not myself, a quarter of an hour before I set off. Such a talking as we had about it!—such a decided determination avowed on my part, again and again, *never* to attend any other ministry than that of Mr. Simeon, from that time forth,—I should vainly attempt to record! The reader may suppose that I kept it from that month of May, till the following November, very faithfully, and on the whole, beneficially. But, with November, a daily arrival of invitations, and an agitated acceptance of them, formed the foundation of a great part of the difficulty and disquietude of which I have already spoken. Mrs. S——— could not but know for what purpose a sedan chair was so often waiting in the passage about eight o'clock in the evening; neither did I, for some time, seek to prevent her speaking of what she either knew or thought of it. But, ever as her monitions came thicker and sharper, and her most just remarks that we could not go two ways at once, or serve God and mammon, pierced my conscience with their truth, I became more and more unwilling to continue my intercourse with her. At length it nearly ceased, and I so arranged my goings out, as to avoid as much as possible, the chance of encountering her in my transit. I thus contrived, till the approach of Christmas, to ward off any intervention on her part, on the subject of my almost constant engagements; for, if I had no party to attend, I managed to make a neighbouring visit to a friend,

or had one to visit me. In short, I kept Mrs. S——— *at bay*, and did as I liked.

But I was not at peace in this way of proceeding. Independently of religious considerations, I had been quite unaccustomed to such a round of gaiety, and felt an inward dissatisfaction with it, which, without any other cause, would have excited uncomfortable reflections. When therefore, this innate distaste to my own proceedings, was accompanied by a consciousness of inconsistency, and of halting between two opinions, which made me seem a deceiver to myself as well as to Mrs. S———, I became really unhappy, and began very seriously to think of withdrawing myself from all worldly society, as Mrs. S——— called my circle of associates; a purpose which was strengthened by my very unexpectedly forming a new acquaintance, that had a still further effect in painfully, but I shall ever have cause to say, most profitably, affecting my mind.

The circumstance of my attending the ministry of Mr. Simeon, was not likely in itself to escape his observation, though as yet I had never been introduced to him; for the congregation of that good man was largely composed of a class of persons, who obsequiously sought to please him, by carrying to his ear such tittle tattle as his peculiar frailties rendered only too acceptable to him. I do not suppose that the accession of any disciple above the class of "Master Starn," could have remained a

secret to him. A proselyte like myself therefore, brought over from the ranks of the Philistines, and of some notoriety as to name and literary position, was a kind of trophy to exhibit in the camp of the saints. All this would have so fallen out in the natural order of things; but when that natural order was assisted in its progress to maturity, by the stirring representations of my case, which were made, right and left, by Mrs. S———, I became a mark for the exercise not only of such evangelical curiosity, but also of such kindly interest, as good people might be supposed to feel for a person whose enquiring state, and manifold dangers, were thus introduced to their notice. Mr. Simeon however, as yet stood aloof from me; and it is of another party that I shall presently speak. I am quite sure that the different revelations which Mrs. S——— had made of my particular exercises of mind, (a knowledge of which I had imparted to her under no apprehension of their passing beyond her own circle) had, by no means, been intended by her to produce me any discomfort; but were merely the ebullitions of her habit of talking; a habit which, in her case, did not, as in mine, involve her in any personal details of her own. Like all proud people, she never suffered another to look into the recesses of *her* interior nature; but like all such persons, at least like those of a lively, good natured temperament, she delighted in being prominent as a comforter and entertainer, and, above all things, as

being possessed of great influence in her particular sphere. It was thus, I am persuaded, and thus only, that she sought distinction for herself, by making me, and my difficulties, the theme of her conversation. Had she been a singer or a dancer, she would have been uneasy in company till she had shown her forces in either way; but, being a religious professor, it was as a "nursing mother in Israel" that she exhibited her own power, and the way in which it affected me.

I was not aware of her communications as it respected me, till I was waited upon one morning by a lady of very agreeable manners, and pleasing appearance, who without using any other ceremony, than that of sending up her name as Mrs. K——— announced, as soon as she had seated herself, that she had paid me a visit in consequence of the very interesting account which she and Mr. K——— had heard of me from Mrs. S———.

I was familiar with her name, and though this was the first time I had seen the lady, I was acquainted by sight with Mr. K———, and had heard enough respecting the severity of his nature from Mrs. S———, to entertain no great desire of making his acquaintance. Of his whereabouts as to position in society, I had heard, that, rather late in life, he had given up his commercial pursuits in London, and, some successful speculations having made him a rich man, had turned his thoughts to the church; and, to prepare himself for ordination,

had come up to the university as a married man. The manner of Mrs. K—— was so cordial and engaging, that I could scarcely, without great discourtesy, have refused her invitation.

I had not been half an hour in the company of Mr. K—— on the evening of my visit, before I discovered that, although his manners were extremely reserved, not to say forbidding, he was a person far more adapted to benefit me in a wise, consistent way, than Mrs. S——. I believe I inherit from my father, a rather unusual discernment of character; and, from the magnetizing power of spirit, I am almost immediately so attracted, or repulsed by the nature of different individuals, that I seem to *know*, rather than to *guess*, what impression I am making on them. I was certain that Mr. K—— detected, and contemned my vanity, and my impulsive habits of thought and action. He clearly perceived my want of subduing at every turn, and of being brought under the yoke of a higher law than I was yet acquainted with. I *felt* this—I did not *suppose* it. I distinctly experienced the presence of a restraining power, which, with the promptness and sureness of an instinct, warned me to be guarded, and "to keep my mouth as it were with a bridle." Nor was it only then, but always, that Mr. K——, by the nature of his spirit, made me sensible when my own was not in unity with it; and when, by being too sharp, (I was never too flat) I caused in him a sensation of distaste and dislike.

With Mrs. S——, on the contrary, I felt no repression, no interior check, but quite the reverse. We stood towards each other in the relation of tartaric acid and soda; and no sooner did we come in contact, than a most exhilarating effervescence was the result. Neither of us, and, when the girls were present, none of us, could talk fast enough, or feel secure of getting our turn to speak, unless we narrowly watched our opportunity. I knew that this was not wisdom, whatever it might boast of in the way of doctrine; and when I came to the pause and quiet which my own apartment afforded me, I was sensible of somewhat upon my spirit, which exceedingly disrelished and disowned the tone of such communion.

I might be said, therefore, in my first visit to Mr. K——, to come under the only really wise and judicious influence that I had yet been introduced to, in the social intercourse of the religious world. It was never difficult for any body to penetrate into my thoughts and feelings, let them be of what kind they might; and, in a far wiser way than Mrs. S—— had done, Mr. K—— soon elicited from me a pretty accurate sketch of my internal condition. It was one, which, having probed, he did not spare to treat somewhat severely, so far as it respected the unqualified contempt he cast upon my pursuits and position as a novelist, and the notice which such acquirements as I was supposed to possess, procured me. Not

that he expressed himself in any uncourteous language;—far from it. It was by the very calmness of the terms he used, that he made the most successful assault upon my cherished idols. He broke them to pieces, indeed, but it was only to show me the danger and deceit that lurked unseen within them; and, while I winced under the pain he occasioned me, I could sufficiently discern that the wound was needful. Blessed be God, who taught me from my earliest years to love truth! I never met with it,—no, not even when it rebuked me,—nay more, when it cut me to pieces, in which I could not say—"how sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

About an hour before I came away, Mr. K—— took his place at the table, with the bible before him, and the bell being rung, the elder children, a boy and girl about twelve and fourteen (who had been sent out of the way whilst we were talking) entered the room, together with three female servants, and he then entered on the duty of family worship. It was the first time in my life that I had assisted in such an act; for when, or where, it was performed in the family of Mrs. S——, I had never enquired. The general tone of her discourse did not seem to me so sufficiently to solemnize the mind, as to incline it for the holy act of supplication.

It was otherwise with that of Mr. K——; by whose chastened mode of expressing himself, as

well as by the tenor of his sentiments, my mind had been so well prepared for such an exercise, as to render it as desirable as it was beneficial. I could not be otherwise than affected by it; but I felt myself in a land of peace, where vehemence, even of a good kind, was to be kept down by the dominion of meekness. Quiet therefore, were the tears I shed, as Mr. K——, reverent, holy, and humble, poured forth his heart in prayer for his family, for himself, and for me, as a "dear friend exercised with temptation, and beset with danger." The spirit of wisdom which manifestly actuated him, divested the personality of the allusion of all that could give pain, by reducing it to the simplest and fewest words, and such words as all that was within me could thankfully unite with.

I had so short a distance to walk home, that, in accompanying me thither, he had little more to do than to put me out of one house into the other; so that had he been inclined, there was no opportunity for conversation. But he was silent till we arrived at the door of my dwelling; when bidding me good night, he only added the words, "be faithful to your convictions."

I can remember the state of mind in which I hastened to my own room, and, after a short time given to musing upon the circumstances of the evening, I sat down to the perusal of "Cecil's Remains," a book which he had put into my hands as likely to be useful to me, and which I soon per-

ceived to contain much plain, practical good sense. Decided sectarianism, no doubt, spoke out in every page; but it was not the sectarianism of Mrs. S——. It was something that I could understand and feel the power of: and it was free, also, from a certain phraseology which always, more or less, offended me in her conversation.

But much as my book interested me, I could not then give it any lengthened attention. My thoughts continually reverted to the impression which Mr. K—— had left upon them. I reflected long and deeply upon the keen insight into the besetting sins and frailties of my nature, which his manner and words had displayed. I never seemed so entirely unveiled to myself, in respect to my vanity, my inflated notions of my own importance and superiority, and the really worthless character of my most prized possessions, as at that moment. I contrasted the feelings which then engrossed me with those which I usually brought home from my visits. Did I,—or could I, on such occasions attempt to pray? Could I venture, with a heart excited and intoxicated with the notice I had received, and luxuriating in the remembrance of the impression my reputed talents and accomplishments might have made,—could I, I asked myself, kneel down and offer before my Maker, a soul so enslaved by the things of earth, and so intensely occupied with self idolatry?—No—I could not—I never even attempted it;—but filled with, and fully conformed to,

" the course of this world," I always, on these occasions, went prayerless to my bed, — except, (and happily, those occasions were not rare) when some wound upon my sensitive heart, sent me there so wretched, that I turned to God as my only Helper against myself. But this mode of seeking divine aid was too vehement, and often, too much alloyed by a mixture of bitter and vindictive passions, to admit of its affording me that sweet refreshment which is " as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth; — even a morning without clouds; — as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain."

Such, and so reviving to my soul, were the holy influences which the incidents of that evening shed over it.

CHAPTER XIV.

MY intercourse with Mr. K—— and his family continued, though not in any degree that could be called intimate. They seemed to be of that class of persons who live very much within themselves, and to limit their society to that of a chosen few. Still, I was a sufficiently frequent guest, to have many opportunities of improving my acquaintance with them, and of thereby strengthening those good impressions which it had been the means of making upon me.

Mrs. S——, highly delighted at having placed me under such able teachers, became much less solicitous to engage me in conversation; and the Christmas vacation having caused a cessation of gaiety till nearly the end of February, and I had also desired and determined, for a time at least, to withdraw from what was called worldly society (a term which included every body I had hitherto known) nothing occurred for some weeks to place me under any body's ban.

Old friends at length came back to college; concerts began again, and invitations dropped, thick as hail, once more upon my table.

There was nothing left but to make a fight of it, or run away, or do as I had ever done, and make one of the gayest of the gay, amongst those whom Mrs. S—— called and considered, "poor lost creatures." Now, albeit I could by no effort of will or imagination, consign these (many of them) my admired acquaintance, and some of them my oldest and most valued friends, to the lot ordained for them by Mrs. S——; yet I could clearly perceive that it was not worth while, for the sake of any pleasure their society afforded me, to peril the advancement of the far deeper and more edifying gratification, which was to be derived from intercourse with persons less under the influence of worldliness of thought and pursuit.

I possessed, by nature, a morbidness of mind which instinctively fed upon the worst and most melancholy side of things; and this, no doubt, had much to do, in fostering a contempt for some of my past pleasures, which, in many respects, rendered it not a difficult thing for me to forego them. Greatly was this tendency of mine increased by my intercourse with Mr. K——, who possessed in a large measure, that severity of judgment which I have invariably found to be the accompaniment, and the alloy, of great truthfulness of nature. I never knew a remarkably conscientious person,—

one whose word was his bond, and with whom no trickery, no pretension, could find a moment's quarter, who was not in some degree, of an austere and harsh temperament; neither have I ever known a gentle, loving, kindly person, — one whose habit of life it was to see nothing but the best side of things and people, whose amiability was not checked by a tendency to deceit, and whose besetting sin was not that of hypocrisy. But whilst I make these remarks, I desire to be understood as being far from generalizing them into a principle, or as stating them in any other form, than as the mere results of my own particular experience.

The invitations, as I have already stated, returned, and with them my disquietudes. I wished to abstain from company, but the sacrifice was great. The society I had to forego was brilliant; —that to which I had to turn, was vapid and bigoted. The best specimen of it was Mr. K—— himself; and it was impossible not to detect in him a narrowness of mind which overshadowed, and in a great measure nullified, the good which his better qualities were fitted to produce.

Dissatisfied on all sides, I looked forward to the possibility of obtaining some settlement of mind, and comfort of heart, from the introduction to Mr. Simeon, which was likely to follow an invitation I had received from his particular friend Mrs. D——; who, tapping me on the shoulder one Sunday as she was following me from church, made my ac-

quaintance in a moment, by asking me if I would come to her Jew meeting on the following evening. Much had I longed to meet Mr. Simeon, and great were the expectations I had formed of enjoying some conversation with him. I was altogether new to the mode of conducting these Jew meetings, or I should have foreseen that then, and there, could be neither the time nor place to hope for his attention.

On the appointed evening I accompanied Mrs. S—— and two of her daughters to the house of Mrs. D——; where, on arriving, we were shown into a room surrounded on three sides of it by chairs, and in the front of those that occupied the end of the apartment, were two or three benches, on which were seated in detached parties of three or four together, a great many ladies; it being, exclusively a female assembly. In the middle of the room stood a large round table filled with toys, babies' shoes, hand-screens, and such like small ware, the contributions of different ladies towards a fancy bazaar which was to be held on some future day for the benefit of the Jews. As we were all supposed to have taken tea before we came, we had only to seat ourselves, and wait patiently the arrival of Mr. Simeon, and the lady of the house, who were taking theirs in the parlour below.

I thought of the different scene at the Professor's concerts, and quailed a little as I contrasted it with the present aspect of affairs. Excellent, good

people, beyond all question, and fit to be my monitors and pattern in every respect, were the greater part of those that surrounded me; but,—but,—I must confess, that I languished a little for the elegance and accomplishment I had quitted; as Mrs. S—— sometimes phrased it, I "hungered after the leeks and the cucumbers of Egypt." Things would be better, I thought, when Mr. Simeon appeared; at all events, the stifled observations given in the ghost of a whisper, the demure looks, the everything that was constrained and disagreeable, would be exchanged for the animated interest, which, if, in a drawing-room, he were like what he generally was in the pulpit, could not fail to follow any sort of demonstration he might be disposed to favour us with.

At length the door opens, and Mrs. D——, accompanied by Mr. Simeon, makes her appearance, and the assembled ladies, to the number of some forty or so, begin to look a little more cheery and life-like. They could not well do otherwise, when Mr. Simeon, immediately upon his entrance, perceiving the display of fancy articles on the table, with almost literally, a hop, step, and jump, darted towards them, and gazing enraptured first on one, then on another,—smiling, nodding,—and seeming to me more as if he were performing the part of Grimaldi in a pantomime, than anything else—at length took up a pair of baby's shoes, held them before his eyes, smiled at them, nodded at them,

laid them down,—then sighed profoundly, and then sat down with his hand before his face.

I should vainly attempt to describe the wonder and distaste (I might use a stronger term) with which I gazed at all this tom-foolery. The metaphorical expression of "*you might have knocked me down with a feather*," was scarcely figurative when applied to the painful revulsion of feeling I experienced. "Was this the man to whom for more than six months, I had listened with nearly as much reverence as I should have listened to St. Paul himself!" For, remarkable as it was, that so long an abstinence from anything preposterous should have been the case, in respect to a person so exceedingly open to the influence of sudden and ridiculous impulses, I do not recollect, until the present unhappy occasion, I had ever witnessed anything in his demeanour, or had heard any observation from his lips, that I could have denominated absurd or puerile. Very eccentric I often considered him;—it would have been strange indeed, for anybody to have been an attendant upon his ministry for the space of half a year, and not to have arrived at that view of his character. But the earnestness of his devotion,—the fervour of his appeals,—the profound knowledge of human corruption, of the danger of temptation,—of the difficulty of conflicting with it,—in a word, his affluence in all that constituted a living experience, and enabled a preacher to speak from it to the heart and to the

conscience of his hearers,—this it was, that had enshrined him in my heart, as a shepherd who well understood how to lead his flock from pasture to pasture, and to feed them, not with dead words, but with the bread of life.

I would not have seen him under such circumstances as this evening invested him with, for any consideration that could have been offered me. Mrs. S—— who sat by my side, soon perceived the impression which this strange scene was producing upon my mind. I could not, indeed, long keep silent; but several times during its exhibition, gave utterance to my disapprobation. I even proposed to go home. "I shall never be able to bear it," I said; "I cannot endure to stay if we are to have much of this."—She besought me to be still and patient. "It was only his way," she said; "he would soon have done with it;"—an assurance which was fulfilled, by his speedily proceeding to the business of the evening.

What that was, I cannot undertake to say; for I attended to none of it. I was wholly absorbed by my own disappointed feelings, and the dissatisfaction which they produced in my mind towards everybody and everything. "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity." I saw the wise man's sentence written upon everything! I was vain,—my worldly friends were vain,—their society vain,—their talents vain,—nothing was real to ameliorate my nature, and to pacify the restlessness of my heart; yet

vainer than all, because he had presented himself to me under the semblance of wisdom, was the teacher to whose influence I had looked for that help which would have strengthened me to make the sacrifice of all that had captivated my imagination, and enslaved me to the world.

Little was I now disposed for the introduction to Mr. Simeon which I had but a short time before so greatly desired. I instinctively drew back, when at the close of the evening, Mrs. D—— came to look for me amongst the company, for the purpose of making me known to him. Her rapid words and manner left me no choice in the question; for she had taken my hand and led me up to him before I had time to speak a word in opposition. I suppose he saw a reluctance on my part to the proposed honour, which promised no accession in me to the number of his female admirers.

"How is your brother, ma'am?" was his first address, and one which so clearly betokened his not knowing what to say to me, inasmuch as it was a painful subject, and must have been known for such by Mr. Simeon, my poor brother being a fellow of his college, that, added to the other unpleasant circumstances of the evening, it so disturbed me, that I hastened off as fast as I could, glad to get home, and to find myself at liberty to relieve my mind of some of its emotions, by expressing them to Mrs. S—— and her daughters, with whom I returned in company. Our walk was not much occupied with

conversation, for that is a word which implies reciprocity of remark; of which, on this occasion, there was none. Poor Mrs. S——, like "panting time, toiled after me in vain;" for, my movements partaking of the excitement of my spirit, I hurried forwards, "muttering my wayward fancies as I roved," till, as soon as I had thrown myself on a chair in Mrs. S——'s room, I ended them with a resolution most audibly and definitively announced, that from that time forth, I would have nothing more to say to the religious world. Mr. Simeon had cured me of all desire for their further acquaintance. I would go back, I said, to my old friends and associates, whose religion, let it be of what kind it might, would have protected them from making so absurd an exhibition of themselves, as I had that night witnessed.

As soon as an opportunity offered for her to edge in a word, Mrs. S—— took up the cause of Mr. Simeon, and the religious community in general. She spoke much, and well, of the singular temperament of Mr. Simeon, and the little control that it received in consequence of the circumstances in which he was placed. She reminded me, with some personal allusions, of the difficulty which attended the career of those, who were too independent of their fellow creatures, to stand in any relation to them which required deference and submission.

But I need not go into any detail of what passed on this occasion. It may suffice to say, that though

silent, I was not convinced by any of her arguments; to which I did not reply, because I was too much occupied by a throng of incipient purposes of escape from her, from Mr. Simeon, and from everybody else, to be paying much attention to what either she or her daughters had to say on the subject.

I may curtail this part of my narrative by stating that the immediate consequence of the evening, was my free and unchecked return to all the gaieties from which I had made a temporary retreat; and, as is usual in such cases, with a deeper plunge than ever.

I have called my return to these pleasures a free and unrestrained one; and, in so far as the giving of a license to my own will to please itself, could be called a free and unrestrained measure, it was so. But the truth and wisdom which I had listened to from Mr. K——, and, in spite of all his failings, the ministry also of Mr. Simeon, had taken too deep a hold upon my conscience, to allow of my finding much satisfaction in resuming this course of life. I was too much awakened by the searching appeals that had been made to the best part of my nature, to slumber any more over the reflections with which they filled my mind. I was extremely unhappy; and became at last so totally miserable, that I resolved to quit the place; a resolution which, after I had allowed it time enough to be sufficiently matured, I communicated to Dr. I——, an old friend of myself and my family, who had

always looked upon my residence with Mrs. S——, and my connexion with "the saints," as her party was termed, with extreme aversion and regret. From the very commencement of it, he had predicted what would be the consequences; and had pronounced me lost,—and his own delight in Handel's Overtures, and Corelli's concertos, lost,—and everything that was pleasant and agreeable, and worth keeping in me, lost,—as soon as he heard that I was an attendant at Mr. Simeon's church. Great therefore, was his joy, when I spoke of my intention to depart; and prompt were his offers of aiding it to the best of his ability. It was not only desirable to go, he said, but to go as far as possible from my present quarters; and as he happened to have some relatives who were domiciled in Paris, and there mixing in the first rank of society, he strongly recommended me to fix upon that place as my residence for the next year; engaging at the same time to secure for me such attentions on the part of his friends, as could not fail to render my *séjour* there extremely agreeable.

Having obtained my consent to his proposal, he began to negotiate with his friends on my behalf; whilst they, on their part, responded in the most cordial manner to his application. Every needful preparatory step was taken; the family fixed upon, with whom I was to board and lodge, terms named, and acceded to, and nothing remained but to finish the treaty by my fixing the day of my intended arrival in Paris.

Under the reasonable apprehension of bringing Mrs. S—— upon me, and not only her, but every body else whom she could enlist on her side, and draw up in battle array against me, I had been profoundly silent respecting my intentions; but when the week previous to my proposed departure arrived, and the necessity of making some arrangement respecting my lodgings during my absence, presented itself to my consideration, I found it impossible any longer to protract a disclosure of my plans. She was greatly surprised, and somewhat shocked to hear of the place I had chosen to sojourn in. England was bad enough, she thought; but France was likely to be much worse. She did not, however, as I expected she would, make use of any arguments to turn me from my purpose. "Go where I would," she said, "I could never get away from the Lord." She then quoted a text from Hosea, which was so favourite a one with her in application to me and my doings, that I scarcely ever recollect to have talked with her about my perplexities or projects, in which it was not forthcoming. "She shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them."

"That's your case, now, my dear lady," she would say; "and will be till you are thoroughly broken down, and find your way hedged up with thorns, so that you can nowhere discover a path. "*Then* shall she say," (and oh, the glowing rap-

ture that lighted up her countenance, I can see it now!) "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."

Having thus discussed the matter, and thankful to find myself so easily let out of it, I begged of her and of her daughters, not to speak of my intentions to any one beyond themselves; for, having fully decided upon my plan, I told them that I wished to secure it from being interrupted by the zeal of any of my religious friends; more particularly, I said, I wished it to be kept from the knowledge of Mr. K——, whose opinion of it, I could not but be certain, would be very unfavourable.

They promised strict attention to my request, and all went on as I could wish, till the ensuing Sunday. The time of my departure was then so near at hand that I scarcely cared whether or not my purpose was known; since it seemed improbable that any opposition of opinion could succeed in altering what was so definitively arranged in its minutest details. On that evening I went for the last time, as I supposed, to Trinity church; for, greatly as Mr. Simeon had fallen in my estimation on the score of wisdom in his private demeanour, I still too much respected his public ministrations to forego my attendance upon them.

Never had I listened to a more powerful and heart-searching discourse than the one which he, on that evening, delivered. If he had been acquainted with my particular circumstances at the

moment, he could not more forcibly have adapted it to my case. It was on the sacrifice of Abraham:—"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." He spoke of the benefit and privilege of having some cherished Isaac to give up to God. He dwelt upon the blessedness that accompanied the surrender of these idols of the heart, and the hundred fold that was recompensed back into the bosom of the sacrificer. He enlarged upon the necessity there was for our being crippled and bereaved on that side of our being which was so prone to nestle down upon its comforts. It was in vain to hope to escape it, he said, or to look for exemption from trial. Go where we would, and give ourselves to what we might, if we belonged to God, or earnestly desired to do so, his hand would find us out, and his voice would command us to slay the object, though dear to us as a right hand, or a right eye, that stood between our souls and him.

It was as if the voice of God himself was speaking to me through his creature, and pleading with me not to turn my back on such opportunities of good as were then before me; but to remain in my lot, even that lot to which his providence had so mysteriously indeed, but still so manifestly guided me. I almost wished that it were possible to abandon my whole project; and, bearing with the infirmities of this faithful man, under the consideration (a consideration of which Mrs. S—— had never

ceased to remind me) that "we had this treasure but in earthen vessels," and also under the remembrance of my own great and manifold failures, to look only on the blessings that his ministry was the means of diffusing, and to accept of that.

I was only arrested in my purpose of renouncing the whole affair, by a remembrance of the inconsistency which must necessarily accompany such an act, and the certain offence it would give to Dr. I——. "Oh no, no," I said to myself, "it is impossible. I must follow it out, and cast myself upon the mercy of God to forgive me, if I am about to do wrong."

In a very low and desponding state of mind, I bent my way up the aisle when the sermon was over. Little did I think, and less did I care, whether or not, my purposes were now made known to any one. I saw indeed, that they must be pursued to their conclusion, but the heat and eagerness with which I had hitherto engaged in them, and the hope with which they had inspired me, were gone. I should hardly have cared at that moment, if Mr. K—— himself had been cognizant of that which I was about to do. Except in a casual way at church, I had not seen him or his wife for some weeks; for, added to my own desire to keep aloof, he was at this time so much taken up in reading for his degree, as to leave him no leisure to give me an evening of his society.

I had reached the little door in the chancel, when

I perceived him and Mrs. K—— standing near it, apparently waiting till I came up to them.

"We have not seen you for a long time," said he; "we are going the same way," and he offered me his disengaged arm. "The sermon to night," he continued, "seemed to have been made for you." I expressed something of the same opinion; and he went on with a few observations which required no particular reply on my side. I hoped to have avoided going in with them, as, besides that I wished to be at home, and alone, I found, when it came to the point, that I still shrunk from encountering his censure, or, more probably, his contempt, for the cowardice and vacillation which my proposed measures would appear to him to indicate. He had supposed me, during the interval that had passed since we met, to be steadily pursuing a retired, quiet course of life; and to be occupying myself in such pursuits as were calculated to confirm my evangelical views, and establish me in the sphere of duty to which they pointed. I did not well know how to endure the consequences, which I felt certain would ensue from his finding himself undeceived in this respect; and to protract, or at all events, to avoid the unpleasant office of being my own tale-bearer, I declined the invitation, which, as soon as we reached his door, he gave me to walk in with them.

Doubtless he had discovered in my abstracted and melancholy manner, the presence of some un-

usual source of disquietude; for, in a tone of gentle kindness, not very usual with him, he said, "Do walk in with us. I have now so little time to devote to any of my friends, that I am glad to avail myself of any I can spare." Mrs. K——, on her part, seconded his request so earnestly, that I felt I must comply with it. I felt also, that my heart must be laid open before them; for, to have sat with them in the communion of friendship, withholding from their knowledge a condition of thought and intention, that was, in all likelihood, to influence the whole remaining course of my destiny, as far, at least, as they could have any interest in it, would have required a capacity for concealment, not to say deceit, of which I am thankful to say, I was never the possessor. I can conceal nothing. It would have been well for me, on many occasions of my life, if I could; for "he that can rule his tongue shall live without strife, and he that hateth babbling shall have less evil;" *—but I was unhappily ill reared in the discipline of the tongue; and have fallen into much sorrow and confusion, more times than I could number, on that account.

I could not but think of what would probably be the course and the conclusion of my Sabbaths in France, and compare it with the quiet, orderly, and truly edifying way in which they were closed at Mr. K——'s. "Shall I see anything like this,

* Ecclesiasticus xix. 6.

where I am going?" I asked myself, when, in the midst of his family assembled for worship, the head of the house officiated with a truth and solemnity which left a savour of holiness upon the feelings, that, of itself, refreshed the soul, and drew it nearer to the source of all good. The answer to the query was prompt and painful; too painful to be borne; and I turned away from the ideas it suggested, as I would from the point of a sword.

It was the custom there, as in many religious families, to have a regular supper on Sunday evenings; so that the presence of the servant while it was going on, enabled me to protract the introduction of the subject it was necessary for me to mention. As soon as it was over, and no one left but Mr. and Mrs. K——, and a very pleasing young woman who was governess to their children, and admitted to confidential intimacy as a friend, I replied to Mr. K——'s inquiry as to how I had been getting on of late, "Not very well. In fact, I am so exercised by a variety of conflicting thoughts and feelings, that I have made up my mind to go away for a time, and see what a change of residence will do for me."

"That was a purpose," he said, "to which he saw no objection; only,—*only*" and he repeated the word with emphatic seriousness, "remember that all the good you are to derive from it, depends upon the circumstances which attend it." He then asked where I proposed to go.

"I dare say you will think it strange," I replied, "but by the advice and assistance of an intimate friend, I have been led to decide upon taking up my abode, for a time, in Paris."

"In Paris!" he repeated, as did also Mrs. K—— and Miss E——, in a tone of voice which sufficiently evinced the extreme surprise which such an announcement occasioned. Perceiving Mr. K—— to remain silent, and painfully embarrassed by the condemnation, which, far more than any words he could have made use of, such a silence manifested, —"I can see you think me wrong, Mr. K——," I said; "but you must pray for me."

"In what words?" he asked. "Shall I venture to implore protection and safety for a friend who voluntarily, and with her eyes open, throws herself into a furnace?"

I may spare to dwell upon what further passed. It was far more "in sorrow than in anger" that he discoursed about the case; and by the calm, sensible representations he made of its almost certain consequences, so effectually worked upon my mind, that, on leaving me at my door, I told him I should, in all probability, abandon my intentions.

The anguish of my heart,—the desolation of my condition,—the total isolation from all human aid (for what can human aid extend of help to the conscience?)—the crowd of emotions that thronged every corner of my soul,—seemed to me, at that moment, more than I could bear. To stand alone

with such a nature, opposed to so vehement, so wayward, so undisciplined a will as mine,—safe nowhere—now taken up by this purpose, now bereft of it I knew not how, but bereft of it I was;—not driven, and yet so influenced by the power of other people, that I must seem to many, and those the oldest and most valued of my friends, as a mere puppet, a thing of whim and inconsistency,—to contemplate all this, at the hour of midnight on a Sabbath, was overpoweringly solemn; but it was good; since, feeling my helplessness, and that I was pressed on all sides by the force of circumstances, which constrained me to make a choice, and to range myself on the part of God or of the world, I made my election. I would give up all. I would renounce, henceforth, all worldly society. I would abandon the project of going to France, and take my lot with the religious world.

It was a night much to be remembered in my mind's history; and stands out prominently distinct, as marking one of its most important turning points.

The following morning was devoted to *un*doing all that Dr. I—— and his friends, at my own desire, had done for me, in respect to my abode in France. There are few tokens of dissatisfaction which are so penetrating and painful, as those which indicate contempt; more particularly are they armed with power to probe to the quick, when in meeting with them, we cannot but be conscious of deserving the sort of rebuke they convey.

The sarcastic smile of the Doctor,—his "Ay, ay, —very fine!" and the like short comments, I took as humbly as I could; but he was not of a nature to be very easily pacified, or inclined to think it a trifling matter that I should change my mind upon a point which it had caused him so much trouble to bring to bear; especially when the persons who instigated me to the alteration, were of a party so exceedingly disliked by him. I believe he never entirely forgave me; assuredly from that time I saw much less of him. But the loss of friends, and the scattering of old connections, "like chaff upon the summer threshing floor," I had observed to be considered amongst my new allies, as a natural, perhaps an unavoidable consequence of what they called conversion. A costly price have I paid in this way!—*then*, unconsciously;—*now*, I see and mourn the reckless, lavish loss I entailed upon a lot too lonely in itself,—yet made still more so by this fanatical surrender of much that innocently pleased, —and more that kindly and faithfully sought to cheer and ameliorate it.

Having bestowed one day upon the requisite task of *undoing*, I bethought myself on the next, as to what was to succeed in the way of *doing*. For, although I was not to go to France, it did not follow but I might beneficially go somewhere else. I had no desire for society of any kind, that was in the least degree likely to endanger the resolution I had taken to withdraw from the world, (so called

in religious parlance) but I should have been glad, if such a thing were practicable, to cast in my lot with a more attractive and rational part of the religious portion of it, than it had yet been my good fortune to fall in with. Added to this, the difficulty of breaking off my accustomed habits of visiting, was so much increased in my present position, that as a measure of self defence it seemed advisable to seek another place of abode. I had a great fancy to get an introduction to Hannah More; and as not very far from her locality, and being moreover a place I wished to know, I turned my mind towards Bath as the point to which I would for the present bend my way.

I had, in some way or another, heard that Mr. Simeon was intimately acquainted with Mrs. More; and by way of ascertaining how far he might be disposed to aid my wish of making her acquaintance, I thought I would call upon Mrs. D——, the prime minister in his dominions. I had no other knowledge of Mrs. D——, than what arose from her inviting me to her Jews' meeting, and my accepting the invitation, in the manner I have stated. But I was quite sure from the little of her character which those circumstances revealed to me, as well as from the general report of it which I had heard, that I could not do her a more acceptable service than that of asking her aid in helping on a work of conversion. She, like Mrs. S——, was a "mother in Israel;" but in a higher department of

the spiritual nursery grounds; and a very warm-hearted, kindly-disposed parent she proved herself, to a great many of the nurslings who came under her fostering care. Of these, I was not going to make myself one; I had no taste or turn for that sort of protection; seeing that it involved in it, as far, at least, as my observation went, the exercise of a degree of servility, and sometimes I fear, even of hypocrisy on the part of the protected, which I would have disdained to be suspected of. I went to her with a direct and simple purpose of asking if she could tell me whether Mr. Simeon was associated with Mrs. More in that kind and degree of intimacy, which permitted his introducing a lady to her notice; and if so, whether he would be disposed to favour me with such an introduction.

But, oh dear me! as if it was at all likely that I could carry out a plain purpose in a plain way, after having set so electric a lady to work upon it!

"Mrs. More, my dear! Mr. Simeon know Mrs. More! to be sure he does!" And then she was off, here, there, everywhere but at the point to which I wished to keep her. I scarcely knew how to introduce my subject in the presence of so much volcanic excitement; and at last brought it out in so confused and mutilated a form, that I believe she could make out little or nothing, except that I was not very comfortable in my mind, and wished to consult Mr. Simeon in his professional capacity as a physician of souls; than which, few things could

have been further removed from my thoughts. I knew nothing then, of those spiritual views of religion which turn the human being inward, and *only* inward, to the oracle within the breast, for the help and counsel he wants; but I had an intuitive sense that the more distressed the spirit is, the less is it disposed to enter upon that sort of sentimental confidence which young ladies call, "opening their minds to their dear minister."

I was in the midst of a very misty exposition of my case, when the door opened, and Mr. Simeon himself made his appearance.

"Now, my dear, tell Mr. Simeon what you have been saying to me," said Mrs. D——. "Dear creature! she is under great exercise of spirit"—and sure enough, what with the puzzle I had made of it, and the other sources of trouble which oppressed me, I was quite overcome, and could scarcely refrain from tears; but they were tears of vexation, and not of romance; tears by no means of a scenic description, and such as I would have been glad to have repressed, almost at the hazard of suffocation. Kind, beyond all words to describe, were both Mr. Simeon and Mrs. D—— at the sight of my emotion; for, finding it in vain to attempt any calm and coherent statement of my case, I said, "I had not been very well of late, and my situation was in many respects, trying." Strange is it, that we sometimes become, by the utterance of certain words, so much the object of pity to our-

selves, that we break down under the mere attempt to speak them! "My situation was trying." Indeed it was; but I think the greatest trial of it at that moment, was the burst of tears which I could not any longer suppress as I alluded to it. Mrs. D—— was about to seek for some lavender drops, but I was myself again in a moment. I assured her I was quite well. She then began to recount to Mr. Simeon, I cannot tell what; for he speedily checked her further detail by saying, as he waved his hand to her,—

"Let *me* address myself to the case, ma'am;" a command to which she signified her obedience by quitting the room. What it could possibly have to do with the matter I cannot tell, except that having heard I was a literary lady, he might think I should relish a classical quotation; but his first words to me after Mrs. D—— departed were,—

"Do you understand Latin?"

"No, sir."

"If you did, I would remind you of an observation of Horace;" which he repeated in English. I forget now what it was. With the exception of a manner peculiar to himself, of tapping the finger of one hand upon the palm of the other, there was nothing of the grimace which had so much offended me on the evening I first was in his company.

He was wise, judicious, and helpful, in his observations; and I felt encouraged to tell him, far more unreservedly than I could have supposed it possible

I should have done, the difficulties that embarrassed and distressed me. With respect to Hannah More, she was what he called "a lovely creature;" speaking, of course, in regard to the beauty of the mind; but at the distance I should be placed from her at Bath, she could not, he thought, be much to me; added to which, she had overwhelming demands upon her time; and he did not imagine there was anything very satisfactory to be hoped for me in that quarter. It was a noble thing, he said, to rise to the occasion, and to trust God, and abide in our lot. Whenever there was the slightest opposition in the way, it was safest not to move. When the cloud rested on the tabernacle, the Israelites were forbidden to journey. The cloud seemed at present on my tabernacle, and he believed I should do well to stand still awhile in my present place of abode.

While we were talking, Mrs. K—— was announced. She had been to my lodgings to ask me to dine with them the following day; "and we were just going to send a note to ask the favour of your company, sir, to meet our friend here," she said, addressing Mr. Simeon.

The dear, warm-hearted man! how readily he assented to her request, and how ashamed I felt of my savage criticisms upon him, on the occasion of the Jew meeting! To be sure, I saw some of the same antics displayed again; but they seemed part and parcel of the man; and really, now that they were manifestly the ebullitions of overflowing de-

light in doing good, and of kindliness of heart, they were not disagreeable.

"*Will* I come?" he said, as Mrs. K—— asked the question,—"Will I *not?* Yes,—yes,—yes,—yes," clapping his hands together at the repetition of every word. We waited only for the presence of Mrs. D——, who soon made her appearance, to render us a very happy party. The earnest interest which my case had excited in the good K——'s, and which, even in the midst of preparing for his degree, had induced Mr. K—— to lose the greater part of a day in giving me a dinner, and inviting Mr. Simeon to meet me, for the sole purpose (as was avowed) of seeing what could be done for my good,—was really quite affecting to me; and made me feel so grateful and humbled, that I returned home with my mind considerably relieved, and felt better disposed than I had ever yet been, to stand it out bravely in my appointed place.

CHAPTER XV.

I MAY pass over the next four or five years of my life, as producing nothing in the shape of event that had much influence upon my mental career.

The only change that had occurred in my external circumstances, was my removal from the house of Mrs. S—— into a small one of my own, where one of her daughters resided with me as a companion. I did not take A— S—— with the intention of retaining her with me in that capacity; but had, in the first instance, simply asked her to make me a visit while she was out of employment; she not being one of the sisters who were engaged in the school. She had occupied a situation as teacher in a seminary near London, which she was obliged to give up on account of delicate health. I found her so useful, and, from her ardent attachment to me, so devoted to the promotion of my domestic comfort, that it would have been a great sacrifice indeed, to have parted from her, after she had once been my inmate. As it turned out, there was no

necessity for my doing so; for she obtained employment as a daily governess in a family resident in the town; an occupation which, whilst it only engrossed her mornings, left her half the day to spend with me; an arrangement which suited me as well as it did her; for I should have felt encumbered, rather than helped by her society, or that of any one else, till the latter part of the day. Under this disposition of affairs we made it out pretty well. She was, as I have said, of great use in promoting my comforts, which consisted much, (too much, indeed,) in those personal indulgences of ease, and exemption from the small troubles of housekeeping, which I was disposed to allow myself somewhat sooner than the privilege of age would have rendered it reasonable to claim them.

It may be enquired what was going on during this interval of time, in respect to my literary pursuits.

I still wrote; but it was on religious subjects.—I had tried what I could do in the way of a theological novel, supposing that the dryness of the theme might be overcome by the attraction of the story; and, being really in earnest to impress my readers with what I considered as truth, I had great delight in interweaving my notions and ideas of it in the form of a fictitious narrative. But this was an error in judgment. Religion should be discussed upon its own merits, and on its own ground of truth and soberness. It should be produced for

what it is, and nothing else. Moreover, the sort of persons who most require instruction on this head, and whom we especially wish, and hope to benefit, by stealing upon their notice in disguise, and in that way inveigling them into listening to a homily, are just the people to be so angry and disgusted by being thus entrapped and disappointed, as to be made rather worse than better, by the experiment.

George the Fourth's very popular Queen Caroline, is said to have observed, in her broken English, when somebody offered her a religious novel, and which she declined to peruse, — "If I have no-velle, let me have no-velle; and if I have sermone, let me have ser-mone, but don't let me have both at once;" and there was great justice, as well as shrewdness in the remark.

The ill success of my evangelical story book, decided me, thenceforth, to forego fictitious writing altogether; and for about three years previous to the period of which I am now speaking, I employed my pen upon professedly serious subjects. I wrote a little volume called "Religious Thoughts;" part of the manuscript of which, I read to Mr. Simeon at the house of Mrs. D——. He was pleased with it; and pleased also, with my attention in submitting it to his notice; but still a literary lady was not the modification of female discipleship, that he best approved of, or that could be made altogether to assimilate with his will and wishes. He

was very kind to me, and invited me sometimes to make one at his dinner parties; but there was a screw loose somewhere, that prevented my being ranked amongst his favourites. The real obstacle to his satisfaction with me, arose chiefly from the narrowness of his disposition. He was too despotic, and too deficient in that generous turn of mind, which could delight and expatiate in a free interchange of thought and opinion, to bear even a "brother near the throne;" still less could he endure that a woman, and a hearer of his, should legislate for herself in the kingdom of thought, and be able, (or suppose herself to be) to pursue her appointed path, without every now and then coming to him to tell her the way.

We were too little thrown into contact with one another, for me to offend him by any obtrusion of my sentiments upon his immediate notice, neither had I any inclination to reveal them, after I discovered his latent distaste to me. It was only upon what might be called "state occasions" that I was asked to join his parties. The little coteries where experience was detailed,—the *sanctum sanctorum* that was open to the *élite*, were favoured spots, to which I was far from docile enough to obtain the entrée.

So much, in explanation of the position in which I stood towards Mr. Simeon. Mr. K—— had long since taken his degree, and quitted the place.

With respect to my old friends and acquaintance,

the ungodly portion of the community, I kept in with such of them, as were kind enough to choose to keep in with me; and who took me as they found me, when they made an occasional morning call at my house. Full of harangues, and declamations, that commonly was; for, as my studies were now, and had been for a long time past, on the doctrinal points of religion, I was a powerful talker thereupon; and I must do myself the justice to say I was a believer also, in so far as the loading of the head with knowledge, is likely to generate faith. Most certainly, I laboured with all my heart to repose in, and to extract comfort from, that which was set before me as the proper object of faith and confidence. This was the Scriptures; or, as I always heard it called, "the word of God" as it stands in the letter, and in the book. That this literal, outward knowledge, was insufficient for the high and holy work of renewing my heart, and linking my soul to its Creator, in sure and certain acquaintance with his nature of love, and beauty, and forgiveness, I had not yet discovered. There was a needful process of crushing and breaking to pieces, and of being made bankrupt in joy to the last fragment I possessed, which I had not yet passed through—but which I must undergo—that I might be at length driven like a frightened bird, into the bosom of my beloved. I was happy enough, for some few years, in my little dwelling, with loving, kind, devoted A—— for my faithful

friend and companion; for the affectionate creature so laid herself out to serve me, that if the surrender of her very life had been asked to do me a service, I believe it would have gone hard with her to refuse it. I wondered sometimes, when I contemplated what she was to me, and how my every wish was anticipated by her watchful care, I wondered, I say, how it could be! "Where was retributive justice?" I asked myself; and, with a latent dread that such a blessing *must* be taken from me to fulfil the unswerving justice of God's dealings, I sometimes added, as I thought of what I was to my poor father,—"it can never last, for I do not deserve it; sooner or later, she *must* be taken from me."

For a long time, however, she was given to me; for all the time, indeed, that her love and care were needful; and a sharp and most unexpected stroke of sorrow, rendered both essential to me. That these did not follow in the general wreck,—that the patience and constancy of the poor girl did not quite succumb beneath the trial which my always impetuous temper occasioned her, and which, exasperated by the pressure of feelings excoriated and bleeding at every pore, was now fearful to myself and all connected with me;—that this did not happen, is only to be attributed to the compassion and loving-kindness of the Lord, who would not lay upon his afflicted creature more than she could bear; but who, in the midst of all her sorrows,

granted her the solace (and oh how great a one!) of a loving friend and companion.

I could not indeed say

> Thy bounteous hand with *worldly bliss*,
> Has made my cup run o'er;

but in respect to all else that remained to me, I could use the language of the poet, and bless the Hand that in

> A kind and faithful friend,
> Had doubled all my store.

I pass over the interval of a year of unmitigated, helpless, hopeless woe; at the end of which period, my health which was all the time greatly impaired, quite gave way; and a severe hemorrhage from the throat, returning at very short intervals, completely laid me prostrate. Never shall I forget the emotion of horror I experienced, the first time it occurred. I knew that raising blood was in itself a dangerous symptom, and in the excess in which it occurred in my case, it seemed to me that it must be fatal; as it no doubt would have been, had it proceeded from the lungs; but this, my old friend Dr. I—— who was a physician, always insisted upon it, was not the case. It was otherwise supposed by my medical attendant; and on my earnestly asking him to tell me truly if he thought I should recover, he said he feared not.

I should vainly attempt to describe the dismay, the desolation of heart, with which I heard this

sentence pronounced. The whole world, and every thing in it, seemed black and blank; and I myself still more so. To die! to cease to be! as applied to myself, was something which I could not comprehend. The line in "Young's Night Thoughts,"

"All men think all men mortal but themselves."

came to my remembrance with a power and light of truth upon it, that was quite new. I had, in a course of district visiting, and such like employments, been an attendant upon many a sick and dying bed; and from the despondency of my mind under its last heavy trial, had often supposed that I should be glad to die. But I found now, that I knew nothing of the state of mind which belongs to the actual approach of death. It is not till that great exigency draws near to us, and the force of circumstances compels us to look it in the face,—it is not till then, that we distinctly perceive, and fully believe, that it is our lot to die as well as others. I did not certainly believe this; but when I did, the revolution it produced in my whole nature, was most strange and remarkable. One of its strongest characteristics, was the absorption of every fear, every hope, every purpose, into the single thought, *I must die.*

So intense and overwhelming was this contemplation, that at times, it seemed as if it would almost overpower my reason; and I could well perceive the possibility of its so influencing any mind not

under the restraints of religion, as to cause it to rush even into the very arms of the object it dreaded. According to the French proverb which says, "*comme Grignan, qui se jette dans l'eau, pour peur de la pluie,*" I believe that many have been driven upon suicide from the very fear of death. I bless God, that no such terrible thoughts at that time visited my mind; though I was oppressed with a burden almost too heavy to be borne, and which I scarcely could have endured, but that the external circumstances which surrounded me, were unusually favourable to the attainment of a state of mind to which, for some time previous to my being wholly laid aside, my attention had been singularly and powerfully directed; and in speaking of which, I must turn back a little way in my narrative.

The prodigious excitement that was caused rather more than twenty years ago, respecting the gift of tongues, must be well remembered by many persons. The particular and overwhelming sorrow under which I at that time laboured, and to which I have just alluded, had been my portion, for about a year, when I first heard of the revival of this miracle in the church, and of its appearance amongst a little knot of believers at Port Glasgow in Scotland. It seemed to me, as it did to everybody else whom I heard mention it, a mere dream of fanaticism, and for some time I paid no sort of attention to it; but the unceasing disquietude of my spirit, receiving but little aid from those external views of

religion which I had imbibed, I began to inquire if anything in this direction had a gleam of comfort in it. I was yearning for something that came closer to the wound, and applied to it some more successful balm of healing, than I could find in expositions of doctrine. I wanted a living monitor, an ever present rebuker, to still the irritated feelings, which, in their present condition of perpetual pain, the slightest word of opposition would rouse to degrading exhibitions of ungoverned wrath, that added to my other sorrows the anguish of a wounded conscience. Well,—too well, did I know the nature and the power of my soul's disease; and again and again I asked, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?"

I do not say that there was not much that was good and true in the religious views of those whose ministry I attended;—it was impossible that it should be without great value, imparted as it was, by faithful and sincere servants of God, whose whole life and labours were devoted to the promulgation of what they conceived to be everlasting truth. I only say, and, at the distance of more than twenty years, I believe that I am right in saying, that it was a ministry which turned the attention of the creature too much in an external direction; and consequently, led the mind *outward*, when all its powers of observation and obedience, should have been directed *inward*. Whatever, and wherever, was the hinderance, I always felt the

want of something more fresh and living than what I met with; and I can well remember how my spirit seemed to leap with joy, when a word here and there fell in my way, to which I could instantly feel that "all that was within me" yielded a ready response—an ardent, entirely satisfied Amen!

Whilst I was in this state of want and wish for some more satisfying spiritual food than I had yet been provided with, I happened to hear of the arrival at the University of a Mr. M——, a gentleman who had spent the preceding summer at Port Glasgow, in a very intimate association with the persons who were reputed to be in possession of the gift of tongues. More from curiosity than anything else, I wished to see Mr. M——; and accordingly requested a gentleman whom I knew, and who had a sufficient acquaintance with him to take such a liberty, to bring him some afternoon to take tea with me.

The interview left a mingled impression on my mind, in which dislike was uppermost. There was something singularly earnest and affirmative in the manner in which Mr. M—— spoke on the subject of the gifts; of the reality of which, he declared that he had himself been a witness; as well as of the perfect restoration to health of two invalid young women, at the command of a brother of one of them. It was quite impossible to doubt a testimony so decidedly and soberly given; for nothing could be further removed from fanaticism or enthusiasm,

than Mr. M—— seemed to be, at least, in his conversation. At the close of the evening, when he read the Scriptures, and, more particularly, when he went to prayer, he became terribly excited; breaking out, in the latter act, into the most awful, unearthly burst of sound I ever listened to, and which actually made me shiver with fear. Both A— and I, as soon as he was gone, agreed that this could never be of God; and if not, that it must assuredly be of Satan; for, beyond all question, it was not in the power of man, unassisted by some sort of spiritual agency, to send forth such a voice, as, without any exaggeration, shook the room in which we were. I did not feel desirous of seeing any more of him; but, disappointed as I was, as far as Mr. M—— himself was concerned, I found new and great satisfaction in reading some of the tracts he left with me; and which were chiefly notes, taken in shorthand, of the sermons of a Scotch minister, who was a believer in the miracle of the revived gift of tongues. There was an unction and vigour in these tracts, which delighted and refreshed me, and caused me to wish to know more respecting the gifts and the receivers of them; a wish which was greatly strengthened by finding that a person so manifestly pious and sincere as the author of these tracts, was favourable to their reception as a genuine work of God.

On receiving a second visit from Mr. M——, I was more agreeably impressed by his discourse. He

dwelt perpetually upon the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, as the gift promised to the church, and as one which he said was to be sought, and obtained, and known as a possession, by the manifestation of some gift,—it might be of tongues, of healing, of the word of wisdom, &c.; but at all events, the Scriptures testified that some seal was to be a witness to the soul, that God was in it of a truth.

All this was new to me; and I can now see clearly enough, that it was the novelty and boldness of the affirmation, that occasioned the vivid impression it made upon my mind, not only then, but for some time after.

I became quite eager to know more of these things; and having a friend in Scotland, I wrote to her to inquire what she had heard and thought about them. She replied that she was herself a believer in them; and that an individual of her own acquaintance, had received the gift of tongues; for by this time, the miracle had spread, and several persons besides the party at Port Glasgow, were recipients, or supposed to be, of the gift. Mrs. S—— and her daughters were firm and fervent believers in the reality of the work; but A—, as well as myself, held a divided opinion thereon.

Matters were in this state, when I received a letter from my Scotch friend, informing me that Mrs. C——, in whom the gift first appeared, and who, at the time of receiving it, was confined to

her bed, and had been for many months in what was supposed to be hopeless consumption, having been raised up by a miracle, was just established with her husband at B——, a village distant about eighteen miles from my residence; that she knew her personally, and had written to her on my account; and that if I wished to make her acquaintance, I had nothing to do but to write to her, and say that I would come over and spend a day with her. As it was then the height of summer, and I should be able to go and return in the same day (having written, and received an answer from Mrs. C—— to say she should be happy to see me) A— and I made out this visit. We took with us a Mr. L——, a married University man who had been at Port Glasgow with the gifted persons; and who, being acquainted with Mrs. C—— before her marriage, was glad of this opportunity of meeting her again.

The circumstances which had placed Mrs. C—— and her husband in their present abode, were the result of an application from Lady —— to Mr. Irving, to procure her a married couple to superintend her school, visit her poor, and on the part of the gentleman, to officiate as domestic chaplain in her family. To this application Mr. Irving replied, by sending down Mr. and Mrs. C——, who had then been but a short time married. They resided in apartments in the school house, and thither we repaired on our arrival.

One would expect to see something remarkable in a prophetess; for the demonstrations of Mrs. C—— in the exercise of her gift, were reputed to be of a prophetic kind; and assuredly, there was something singularly striking in this lady's appearance. She might be about six and twenty years of age. In person she was tall, and somewhat dignified, with a magnificent development of forehead, and remarkable elevation in the crown of the head. She was decidedly handsome. Her manners were gentle, quiet, and retiring; but such, as on the whole, gave me the idea of her being a proud, rather than a humble person. Whatever was the cause, I did not feel at my ease in her company; but the strangeness of the circumstances that enveloped her, had probably, much to do with this. I did not allow myself to suppose so at the time, but I have since thought, that a certain mournful anxiousness which was quite visible both in her countenance and manner, was the result of her being troubled with a latent consciousness that she had been too hasty in announcing herself as the favoured subject of miraculous endowment; and that she began to discern, that she would have been more easy and happy, without the notice which such a condition, necessarily, attracted towards her.

In saying this, I do not for a moment doubt but that she believed herself to be inspired; and to be divinely required to give forth whatever might be presented to her mind as a message to her fellow

creatures. It was this persuasion, I quite believe, which, struggling as it did, with apprehensions that she might be mistaken, and that, whether mistaken or not, she had placed herself in a position in which she was no longer a free agent, since everybody who came in her way would be watching and waiting for some demonstration from her, and would be likely to prove sceptical or scornful in regard to her claims without it,—it was this internal conflict, which, as I believe, imparted to her demeanour an appearance of disquietude, that passed for anxiety about the church, and was supposed to denote an inward lamentation, after the manner of Jeremiah, for its lapsed condition; but which, I am inclined to think, if it could have been scrutinized, would have worn the semblance of a more direct application to her personal feelings.

These were after thoughts on my part. At that time I was greatly led away by her pretensions, and returned home much solemnized in spirit, not from having witnessed any exhibition of her gift, for none occurred; but from a feeling of restraint and subjugation upon my nature, which, from whatever cause arising, it was good for me to experience.

A few weeks after this, I received a note from her, inviting me to spend a few days with them; an invitation which I accepted. Some of the circumstances attending this visit may be worth detailing.

The coach by which I travelled to B—— went

very early in the day, and on my arriving at the lodgings of Mr. and Mrs. C—— at the school house, I found they were not returned from the Hall, Lady ——'s abode, where Mr. C—— officiated every morning as chaplain to the household, and after which, he and his wife generally remained to breakfast with Lady ——, who, as a widow, living alone, received them frequently as her guests. More than two hours I think must have elapsed before they returned; during which time I sat in melancholy companionship with my own thoughts. I was so totally unused to be separated from A—, that such a circumstance was in itself a vexation; but I had heavier trials than that upon me. I had been for nearly two years in great affliction; my health was daily getting worse, under the presence of an irritating cough that rendered many of my nights sleepless; and little was before me but the prospect of being wholly laid up, unless I put myself under decided medical treatment; a measure to which I had the greatest possible reluctance, and which, as yet, I had contrived to avoid.

I wished a great many times that I had not accepted this invitation; but as that was useless, there was nothing left but to make the best of it. Both Mr. and Mrs. C—— welcomed me on their return home, with great cordiality; and I was pleased to observe a cheerfulness of manner on the part of Mrs. C—— which was far more agreeable than the reserve which marked it at our first meeting. They

gave me the idea of people who had just escaped from a situation of constraint; and, as it happened, something of the sort was actually the case, the circumstances attending their breakfast at the Hall that morning having been of an unpleasant kind, in consequence of the presence of some divine from London, who took the liberty to question the reality of the gift of tongues, and that in a way so shocking to the feelings of Mrs. C——, that she had been compelled to rush out of the room, and go to prayer in an adjoining apartment.

She was seated by me on the sofa during the narration of this matter; which, having been amply discussed, some remark of mine occasioned her to take my hand, as if in token of sympathy with what I said. She retained it so long, that I began to feel a degree of embarrassment, which was augmented into dread, when I perceived her to cover her eyes with her disengaged hand, and sink into a long and profound silence. Mr. C—— also ceased to converse. It was really an awful contiguity in which I found myself; but being in a measure prepared for a demonstration at any moment, I was not so wholly taken aback, as I otherwise should have been, when she at length broke out with a loud and sudden burst of the unknown tongue. Wholly unknown indeed was it to me; but it sounded something like the Greek which I had occasionally heard recited in the Senate House. It lasted but a very little time, and was succeeded by

short and frequently repeated sentences in good intelligible English, and all of the most cheerful and encouraging nature. "Ye are his witnesses—ye are his witnesses," I remember was one of them. After declaiming in this way sometime with her eyes closed, she went off into singing a hymn in a voice of triumphant joy, that was inexpressibly delightful.

It strangely, but profitably affected me. Mr. C—— had long been kneeling in prayer before she ended; and irresistible was the impulse that inclined me to unite with him. I shall never say, nor think otherwise, than that it was a glorious, beautiful outbreak that had come upon us; and impossible was it for me then, and equally impossible is it for me now, to believe, but that whatever spirit might be the original prompter of the act, the mighty power of God overcame all evil in it, and rendered it one full fraught with blessing to the souls of his poor, ignorant, helpless creatures. Never—no never, had my parched spirit so satisfactorily drank of living water, and been refreshed. Tears, but not of bitterness, tears that soothed and benefited me, almost rained from my eyes; and when she ceased, it was an act of instinct for me to go up and kiss, and bless her, for the season of good she had been the means of bringing to my withered heart.

She seemed herself to have derived new life from the exercise. Her very countenance was altered, and lighted up with a radiance that had something

divine in it. She was calm and happy, and after a little quietness, the devotional fervour of her spirit being expended, she became so easy and social in her deportment, and Mr. C—— so full of simple kindness, that I felt a liberty of conversation with them both, which promised to render my visit a far more agreeable one than I had ventured to anticipate.

After we had been together some two or three hours, and I was walking out with her in the village to visit some of the cottagers, she mentioned as a thing quite by the bye, and one that she had forgotten, that Lady —— had sent a message by her in the morning, to say that she should be happy to see me with them at dinner. Nothing seemed to have been more probable, than that I should have received this notification too late to have presented myself in any other than my morning and travelling dress, at the table of a lady of rank who was nearly a stranger to me; having seen her only on the occasion of my former visit, when we all took tea at the hall.

It would not become me during, possibly, the lifetime of the respected lady at whose house I was thus made a guest, to enter into any detail of what passed there. I may shortly say, that a demonstration of a very different kind from that which had occurred in the morning, was made by Mrs. C——, soon after the dessert was placed upon the table, and the servants had withdrawn. I was witness

also to another, on the morning I left, and which occurred at the breakfast table of Lady ——. I felt certain that it would not be possible for these abrupt and strange interruptions to domestic comfort to be long tolerated. Much as I believed myself to be edified by the particular exhibition of her gift which had greeted my own arrival, I confess I should have been sorry to have dwelt in any close and constant association with a person invested with such mysterious attributes, and liable to make such a sudden and perplexing manifestation of them. I was not at all surprised therefore, to receive a letter from Mr. C——, a few weeks after I returned home, informing me that he had received his dismission from her ladyship; that he was about to quit B—— on such a day, and that he and his wife would pay me a short visit in their way to London, where they were going to be Mr. Irving's guests, till their way was opened elsewhere. The arrival of a person so every way remarkable as Mrs. C——, and whom all the religious people I knew, were longing to get a sight of, rendered it an imperative duty for me to make a tea-party on the occasion, and invite as many of them as my room would hold. Manifold were the varieties of religious faith which my apartment that night contained; and of course, amongst the company assembled, Mr. M—— held a distinguished place. As always happens on such occasions, everybody's expectations were doomed to meet with disappoint

ment. The prophetess was not only silent, but absolutely dull, and unpleasantly abstracted within herself. If she had been made of wood, she could not have sat in a more motionless and inanimate way. The whole thing, as far as she was concerned, was a dead failure.

On the next morning, matters altered for the better, if better, indeed, I thought it; but the character of the manifestation to which I was a constrained and unwilling witness, was of so denunciatory and terrible a kind, as to fill me with dismay and consternation.

It occurred under rather curious circumstances; curious, at least in this way; that, although I had taken myself out of the way, under an apprehension that something of the sort might take place, it seemed impossible for me to escape from coming under its influence.

The case was this: — Soon after breakfast, A— being gone to her pupils, I found myself alone with Mrs. C—— and her husband; a position of affairs which I did not altogether like, foreseeing what it might possibly lead to. I was still more unwell in health than when I was their guest; and peculiar circumstances occasioned me also to be still more dejected in mind; whilst the character of that dejection threw a degree of fretfulness over my spirit, which wholly disinclined me for the docility which was required to render me a perfectly patient recipient of Mrs. C——'s somewhat

wild and incongruous exhibitions. Under the plea, therefore, of having to give orders to my servant about the dinner, I left her and her husband together, in a little breakfast room I had upstairs; and having despatched my business in the kitchen, I went and sat down in the parlour, intending to remain there till one, or both of my visitors, came down stairs. I had not been there above five minutes, before I heard a sudden burst of the most remarkable sounds that had ever met my ears, and which, till I remembered their source, seemed to me like the ravings of insanity. It was only a momentary doubt that I entertained respecting their nature and origin; for it speedily flashed across my mind, that a manifestation of the Spirit, as it was called, was taking place on the part of Mrs. C—— in the room above. Strange is it to say, that repugnant as it was to my feelings at this particular juncture, to become a party to this exhibition, it seemed impossible for me to remain absent; — an irresistible force appeared to drive me, whether I would or not, into her presence; in which in the space of a few moments I found myself.

I perceived that she was sitting with her eyes closed, and giving utterance, not to anything in the unknown tongue, but as usual, to short and frequently repeated sentences, to which Mr. C——, standing near her, was listening with fixed and reverential attention. I sat down, with feelings much like those of a culprit on whom a heavy sen-

tence of punishment was passing; for, that the message was to me, I felt a deep and solemn conviction. It spoke of tremendous suffering for the flesh, and fleshly will; which "must be purified!" "it *must* be purified!" Again and again these words were uttered; as were those that followed—"It must be by fire!—it must be by fire!" "God's will be done!" I thought, and so I prayed; and overwhelming as was the earthquake (for such it seemed) that shook my soul,—the "still small voice" was not wholly drowned in the convulsion.

As soon as she ceased to speak, and things regained their natural tone, and Mr. C—— had gone out to walk, I felt a strong impulse to tell her my particular sources of disquietude, and ask her counsel on my case. What she replied was wise;—but far wiser was that which I could have received from a counsellor within my own breast, and to whose divine aid my attention had for some months past been turned, by the perusal of two books which circumstances had thrown in my way. One of these, I have already mentioned, as the Letters of William Law; the other was the "Letters of Isaac Pennington;" one of the earliest members amongst the primitive Quakers. Great as was the benefit I derived from Law's book,—it was secondary to that which the Quaker's afforded me. "Being dead," he spake indeed to me; and were it permitted to the spirits of the departed, to hover over the souls of those who are deriving benefit from their minis-

trations, I could well believe that in the dreary hours and dreadful scenes that I was now about to enter upon, the spirit of that saint must have been near me, beholding with holy satisfaction some of the fruit of his labours. I do not believe it would have been possible for me to have lived in the possession of my senses, under the agonizing trials that were at hand, but for that "preparation of the heart which is of the Lord," and to which the ministry of those precious letters, so mainly contributed. How often has the turbulence of my heart been quieted by a few simple words, addressed, as he supposed, to a sufferer of a hundred and seventy years ago, but destined to bring a message of peace to one as yet unborn!

What living direction did I find in such sentences as these! "It is good for thy spirit, and greatly to thy advantage, to be much and variously exercised by the Lord .... And oh, learn daily, more and more, to trust him, and hope in him, and not to be affrighted with any amazement; nor to be taken up with the sight of the present thing ...."

"And though sin overtake, yet, let not that bow down; nor let the eye open in thee, that stands poring at that ... Only do thou sink into, or at least pant after, the hidden measure of life (he means the holy Spirit) which is not in that which distresseth, disturbeth, and filleth thee with thoughts, fears, troubles, anguish, darkness, terrors, and the like. No, no! but in that which inclines to the

patience, to the stillness, to the hope, to the waiting, to the silence before the Father." * And again;

"O my friend! after it hath pleased the Lord in tender mercy to visit us, and turn our minds from the world, and ourselves towards him, and to beget and nourish that which is pure and living of himself in us, yet, notwithstanding this, there remains somewhat at first, yea and perhaps for a long time, which is to be searched out by the light of the Lord, and brought down and subdued by his afflicting hand . . . .

"But how doth the Lord find them out? O consider! 'his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.' By his casting into the furnace of affliction, the fire searcheth. The deep, sore, distressing affliction which rends and tears the very inwards, finds out both the seed and the chaff, purifying the pure gold, and consuming the dross; and then at length, the quiet state is witnessed, and the quiet fruit of righteousness brought forth, by the searching and consuming nature and operation of the fire. . . . ."

"Oh! the Lord guide thee daily, and keep thy mind to him!

"Look unto him. Help, pity, salvation, will arise in his due time; but it will not arise from any thing thou canst do or think; and faith will

* Letters of Isaac Pennington, edited by John Barclay, p. 7.

spring, and patience be given, and hope in the tender Father of mercy; and a meek and quiet spirit will be witnessed, and the Lamb's nature springing up, and opening in thee, will excel in nature, kind, degree, and virtue, all the faith, patience, hope, and meekness, which thou, or any else otherwise, can attain unto. Oh! look not at thy pain or sorrow, how great soever; but look *from* them, look *off* them, look *beyond* them, to the Deliverer! whose power is over them, and whose loving, wise and tender Spirit is able to do thee good by them."*

I am straying far from Mrs. C——; but if my reader thinks in any measure as I do, on the nature of heavenly things, he will thank me for detaining him over such extracts as these.

The counsel of Mrs. C——, though good in the main, was complicated, external, and consisted, as usual, in a string of doctrinal texts, of which "*Abide in me*," was the principal one that fixed itself upon my mind.

In the evening we were all to visit Mrs. S——, at whose house there was a large assemblage of the religious world. I must not trust myself to speak of the circumstances of that night. I can only say, the excitement attending them was dreadful;—and I returned home most thankful, that a guest who brought so much fearful confusion into my sphere

* Pennington's Letters, p. 106.

of action, was to take her departure on the morrow.

She went;—but not so the consequences of her transient appearance amongst us. It had stirred up a spirit of emulation in the family of Mrs. S——, with my poor A— amongst them, which, acting upon their intense pride and limited experience, caused it to possess all the evil, and none of the good, that attended the case of Mrs. C——.

It was early in the month of November 1831 that these things occurred; by the end of the month, I was wholly prostrated on my sick bed, and more or less confined to it till the succeeding spring. What had been going on in the house of Mrs. S——, where A— was a daily visitor during this interval, I could not tell; but in some way, and somewhere, circumstances had occurred to produce a strange and painful alteration in her manner to me. I am far from being a person to be cajoled with semblances, where realities are wanting. It is my nature always to detect evil; sometimes I am afraid, even when it has no actual existence; but to look for the evil of losing A—'s love, to suppose myself an object of aversion and avoidance to *her*, was a species of misery and mischief, which the utmost stretch of my morbid imagination could never have reached to! Still, there were unwonted absences on her part from my sick couch, and short, and unkind speeches when she was by the side of it, that wondrously perplexed me to understand, in one who, in my slightest ailment, had,

" Like the watchful minutes to the hours,
Still and anon, cheered up the heavy time,
Saying ' what lack you, and where lies your grief,
Or what good love may I perform for you?' "

I discovered at length some solution for this painful change, in her becoming exceedingly devoted to the subject of the gifts, and to those who upheld and discoursed upon it. Mr. M—— was, of course, the chief leader on this point. He had taken a little room near me, for the purpose of a daily prayer meeting, at a very early hour in the morning; and A— was, with her sisters, a constant attendant there, as Mr. M—— said I ought to be also; for, to be ill, was little less than a sin in the eyes of that good man, and every other believer in the revival of miracles. Faith, as in the days of the apostles, was all that was needful to raise the sick; and much distress was occasioned me, by the well-intended, but most fanatical manner in which I was, in a sidelong way, rebuked for not rising from my bed, and going forth as a witness to the power of the Spirit. I was so much impressed with the remarkable prophecy of suffering that Mrs. C—— had, as I believed, addressed to me by divine commission, and which in a winter of great affliction, had been already partly fulfilled, that I literally dared not doubt the existence of the miraculous gifts, or question the proceedings of those who advocated them. I did not know what species of chastisement might yet be added to my

present cup of sorrow, if I were not obedient to all that was set before me as a duty. My mind was wholly unbalanced, by the bold pretensions of those who surrounded me, and the extreme prostration of all my powers, which the nature of my illness produced.

Mr. Cecil remarks that "a tender conscience is a very great blessing; but that a scrupulous conscience is a very great curse." The distinction is quite essential to be made and acted upon; for I know, by experience, that there is scarcely any thing strange, ridiculous, or presuming, which the human being may not think itself required to say or do, when once the matter becomes a question of conscience.

I could fill a volume with narrating the many wild, offensive, and preposterous actions into which the influence of a scrupulous conscience has often led me; insomuch, that I am persuaded, that in many instances, the strangeness of my conduct was only pardoned on the score of my being *non compos mentis*. In fact, when the mind is drawn into that position of thought which represents the abolishing of common sense, and the reason of things, as a religious duty, there seems to be no protection for it from a liability to adopt such measures as the generality of persons would be inclined to attribute to insanity.

I quite well recollect on a particular occasion, when I was considering whether, on the whole, it

would not be a proper sacrifice to duty to burn my pianoforte, I was only arrested by the remembrance that it must be done in the open air, and that some one or another concluding it an act of madness, would rush to prevent its accomplishment. My beautiful collection of music was, under the wild influences of those wild times, when Mr. M—— burnt his books by the dozen, given to the servants to light the fires with; and for many years after, I considered it unlawful to touch my pianoforte; in fact it is only within the last five years that I have fully ventured to renew my music.

There is nothing for it, I am more and more persuaded, after much bitter and costly experience, but simply to obey the monitions of the inward guide; which often point to the fulfilment of duties from which the cowardice of human nature recoils, as involving in them great pain and struggle; but which will ever counsel the avoidance of whatever is at variance with sound judgment, and a right appropriation of our particular gifts, whether of nature or grace.

After the tribute of thankfulness that I have most sincerely rendered to the works of William Law and Isaac Pennington, it may occasion some surprise to find that I had not sufficiently benefited therefrom, to be able to make a stand against the pressure of influences so opposed to them in wisdom and sobriety, as were those amidst which I was placed. But it was only a few months previous

to this period, that those works had fallen into my hands; and the principles to which they directed my willing attention, were not, as yet, sufficiently consolidated into strength, to sustain me under the apprehensions I entertained of disobeying the will of God, by setting up my own sentiments and will against those of his servants, as I concluded Mr. M——, and A—, and all those they favoured, to be.

There scarcely ever was an instance, I think, in which a person not deficient in understanding, was, by the power of superstition, so totally embondaged and terrified by the most contemptible means, as I then was. I wonder at myself when I look back upon it. But, added to a natural tendency to scrupulosity of conscience, I was then so shaken in nerve by the sleeplessness of my nights,—(one of the most distressing consequences of my illness) that I had no capacity to do anything energetic. If I ever did rouse myself, my natural impetuosity of temper caused me to be violent; and, of all things, in my present state, violence was the most to be dreaded, and, if I wished to live, avoided; besides which, any appearance of it, or of any other of my frailties, furnished those about me with a rod wherewith to chastise me, which they did not fail to make use of.

The duty of getting up, and walking, and being made whole, by an act of faith, seemed so imperative, and certainly, if it could be accomplished, so

agreeable, that, one morning in March, about six o'clock, I determined to get up, and accompany A— to Mr. M——'s prayer meeting. Assuredly, the power of the mind over the body prevailed, for I took no harm on that occasion, nor yet, for a little while afterwards, during which I continued my attendance there. The notions of my medical man not being exactly in accordance with such proceedings, he openly said, that it was of no use prescribing for me whilst they lasted; and accordingly for a time he withdrew. It was not long before I had to send for him again. My illness returned much worse than ever; and now, being told by him, and believing myself, that there was no hope for me but in the most absolute stillness, I told A— decidedly, that I would go out no more. If I were to die, as I believed I should, and as my doctor thought also, nothing was more fit for me than the preparation to which silence and retirement were such needful auxiliaries. It was on the 12th of July, 1832, that I said I would leave my house no more; neither did I leave it, till the 29th of August, 1834, when I quitted it for ever.

The reader is now, if he pleases, to behold me weakened and subdued by illness, and by apprehension—left only with my usual companion. Mr. M—— is gone, and almost everybody is gone; for it is the time of the long vacation. Still the prayer meeting proceeds as usual, but I know nothing of it,—except that A— is a pretty constant attendant

at it. I would not even know this, if it were possible to avoid it; for I am labouring to empty my mind of all thoughts, all remembrances, and to become, in every sense of the word, "dead to the world, and alive only unto God."

And now it is that those parts of Scripture which particularly point to a quiet waiting upon the Lord, come home to me as a message from heaven. I keep a Bible with marginal references, always by my side; and, as a particular text is suggested to me, I turn to look for it. I am sufficiently well acquainted with Scripture, to fix immediately upon the place where I am to find it; and when I do find it, it guides me, most likely, to many more of the same refreshing nature. I have thus, for the present, got a little sweet food; the food which an inward want and wish directed me to look for. I then lay my book down, close my eyes, and give myself up to the impression it has left upon my mind. I begin to understand the meaning of such passages as "my soul, wait thou still upon God." I begin also to comprehend more clearly, many of the monitions of a like kind, in the good Quaker's book. I find within me an innate repugnance to everything that is merely notional, and of the nature of which, I have no living and sensible experience. I pass whole days lying upon my sofa with my eyes closed, and many sleepless nights upon my bed, in the constant mental repetition of a few simple words, such as "Lord, meeken me! Lord, quiet me!"

I speak deliberately, and under a consciousness that what I say is known to the Searcher of hearts, when I state that I have many times at the close of a day thus passed, retired for the night, with my interior nature so denuded of every earthly thought and feeling, that it seemed to me all white and transparent, and as though I were almost unclothed of the body; a condition so beautiful and blessed, that I never felt it for the shortest interval, without trembling at the possibility of its being disturbed by any outward intrusion.

No one, I am persuaded, who has not made the experiment, can form any conception of the efficacy of mental prayer, thus concisely expressed, and constantly sustained. Coleridge seems to have experienced in some measure its effects.

"My main comfort," he says, "consists in what the divines call the faith of adherence, and no spiritual effort appears to benefit me so much as the one earnest, importunate, and often for hours, momently repeated prayer, "I believe, Lord help my unbelief! Give me faith, but as a mustard seed, and I shall remove this mountain! Faith,—faith, —faith! I believe; O, give me faith! O, for my Redeemer's sake, give me faith in my Redeemer!" *

Thus passing the summer, by the time the winter arrived, I found my mind considerably esta-

* "Reminiscences of Coleridge," by Cottle, p. 382.

blished in a certainty of divine knowledge. Only with the aid of God's blessed Spirit, I had found out the way of the Lord. I knew what it meant. I knew that it was *one* way, and not *many* ways. I had a personal, experimental acquaintance with the only path that led to communion with God. I had found it to consist, not only in the silencing of the outward man, but in the silencing also of every thought, and in the concentration of the soul and all its powers, into a simple, quiet, watching and waiting for the food which its heavenly Father might see fit either to give or to withhold. In no case could it be sent empty away; for, if comfort, light, or joy were withheld, the act of humble waiting at the gate of heavenly wisdom, could not but work patience in it; and thus render it by humility and obedience, more "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light," and also more blessed in itself; for, in the absence of every earthly source of happiness, and in the presence of almost every kind of evil, the exercise of patience gives a "song as in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one goeth forth with the pipe, to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel."

It was thus, in suffering, in silence, in solitude, and in unceasing prayer, that a seed of divine truth was developed in the depth of my heart, which has never from that time been wholly lost. I trouble myself nothing with this or the other creed or notion.

I hold to that which God himself has taught me. I would give no offence to any; but none shall rob me of that crown, and hope of rejoicing, which the Lord himself gave me in the day of my distress; even the knowledge of the way that leads to him!

CHAPTER XVI.

IN the sketch of my mental history that I proposed to give, my purpose was to trace the particular influences that have conducted me to the religious views I now hold.

I am aware that it is in a very brief and evanescent form, that this object has been accomplished; but I must leave it such as it is, to the reader's clemency, while I devote a few pages more to the conclusion of my narrative.

I might amplify it greatly, were I to go into any detail of the strange and melancholy scenes in which I was a sharer, towards the close of the year 1832. But though the interval is long, there may be those yet living, to whom such a procedure on my part, would give pain.

I may shortly say, that the heaviest blow that had yet been levelled at me, at length fell. I was constrained to part with my once faithful A—.

I had warded off this stroke as long as possible; for, besides that I did not well know how to do

without her in my helpless state, I dreaded the possibility of sinning against God, by sending from my house a person whose pretensions to inspiration were supported by some whom I supposed better qualified to judge of the case than myself. One of these persons (now some years deceased) in a state, as was afterwards proved, of incipient insanity, obtruded himself into my presence as I lay upon my sofa, and passed more than an hour in the most awful denunciations upon me for my want of faith; —first, in lying there, when I ought, he said, "to be up, and about my Father's business;"—and next, in not acknowledging the claims of A— to inspiration. About three weeks after this visit, this individual, by some unmistakable indication of his condition, was under restraint as a maniac.

This was, by no means, a solitary instance of the way in which my retirement was invaded, if not always by decided lunatics, yet by persons whose state of wild fanaticism and excited passions, might almost have justified their being so denominated.

But, had I no friends, it will be asked, whose presence or influence might have shielded me from these fearful, and unwarrantable intrusions? No; I really had none to whom I could have applied under such circumstances. The only near relative I possessed, was no more; and the rest of my kindred were settled in their own dwellings elsewhere, and with their own engagements to occupy them. My particular habits of life for the last few years,

and my entire satisfaction in the obscurity and retirement to which A—'s affectionate friendship gave all that I wished or wanted in the way of comfort, had so greatly separated me from all intimacies, that had I desired to interpose the presence of a third person between me and her, and her proceedings, I knew not where, properly, to look for such a one.

Mrs. S—— and her daughters, to whom I might, and should, under any other circumstances, have turned as presenting to me such a resource, were quite as far gone as poor A— herself, in the folly and distraction which Mrs. C——'s appearance, and Mr. M——'s ministrations, had been the means of stirring up in the minds of many persons in my locality.

My kind and valued friend the Professor, indeed, had not lost sight of me; but it was not in the line of my acquaintance with him, long and intimate as it had been, to obtrude subjects of so personal and delicate a kind, upon his notice. Added to this, though I still received his morning visits, every three or four days to enquire after my health, if visits they could be called, which, after his fashion of conducting such matters in the morning, when he wanted to be taking his daily exercise, and not losing time, were of no longer duration than five minutes at the utmost, and that interval occupied by his standing as if on the point of going away every moment,—in addition, I say, to the

feeling it quite out of place to bring my peculiar disquietudes before him, I was harassed with doubts as to whether it was right to continue my acquaintance with him at all. Wreck and ruin upon all that was earthly,—be it friend or foe,—the right hand or the right eye,—father, mother, husband, or wife,—the more costly the sacrifice the better,—this was the doctrine in which I had been built up for some years past, but more particularly since Mr. M—— had fallen in my way.

The good Professor was, of course, a doomed man then, as being manifestly of the earth, earthly;—and though, as yet, I could not bear the idea of renouncing all intercourse with one so justly esteemed, my poor shaken mind was too much uncentred, and too greatly enslaved by the superstition which was so rife about it, not to dread the possibility of sin in continuing that intercourse.

With respect to Dr. I——, my other intimate friend, he had wholly withdrawn himself from my society. The extreme displeasure and disgust with which my association with the evangelical party had inspired him, augmented by some not very conciliating conduct on my part, had totally alienated him, and for many months, I had seen nothing of him. Mr. Simeon and his allies, had long stood aloof from me; for I need not say, that the introduction of the subject of the gifts into any part of his dominions, was high treason, and to be punished with the utmost rigour of the law. I had been

totally discarded from his favour about two years previous to this time, for presuming to lend a book of Mr. Erskine's, called "The Freeness of the Gospel," to one of his female disciples, after he had taken the trouble, not only of talking to me for the space of two hours, one evening at the house of Mrs. D——, upon the dangerous and unorthodox tenour of the work,—but also after he had written down on paper, and given me his criticisms upon it. True it was, that all this had occurred; and civilly enough I listened to his remarks, and received his criticisms. As I was not going to enter upon the hopeless task of trying to bring Mr. Simeon over to my opinion, and had no design of giving up my own, there was nothing else to be done, but to be quiet and civil. But, that quietness and civility were to stand for submission and obedience, no word indicative of either being spoken by me,—I had not imagined. I was not prepared therefore, to hear afterwards, that I had given him unpardonable offence by lending the book just as though I had never heard a word from him to its prejudice, to a young friend who was a hearer of his, and who incautiously spoke of the book to him.

I was really sorry that the good man should regard me with such disfavour; for I felt that, in its time and place, and as preparatory to something better, his ministry had been of incalculable benefit to me. A few months previous to the period to which I am now alluding, when I was exceedingly

ill, and supposed to be fast sinking, I had said to a lady who was making me a morning call, and who was speaking of Mr. Simeon, that I was grieved at his displeasure;—adding (but only as if I were thinking aloud, and without the slightest desire, or supposition, that the words would be repeated to him) "I should like to be at peace with him before I die." Greatly was I surprised, and, truth to say, vexed, when a few days afterwards, he called in his carriage at my door, having been induced to do so by this lady's report of what I had said about him.

A— who was not at that time distinctly alienated from me, wishing to shield me from the painful excitement which might follow an interview with him, advised my yielding to the inclination I felt, to postpone his visit to the next day. He was not well pleased at this; but sent up word that *perhaps* he might come again—which he did.

I was lying on my sofa in a little sitting room I had upstairs, and though unable to rise to greet him, I received him as if I were pleased to see him; which, in a measure (though not a very great one) was the case; for I was at that time engrossed by efforts to be quiet, and, as far as possible, removed from all excitement; a mental condition which the approach of Mr. Simeon, under any modification, was not particularly calculated to facilitate.

The very way in which he entered the room, and the rueful length of his countenance,—a coun-

tenance on which I perceived a variety of not the most pleasing emotions, occasioned me involuntarily to draw back as he approached, and in the most mournful of tones, asked me "how I found myself?" He had not sat long by my side, when he expressed a hope "that I was now fully aware of the delusions of those persons with whom I had been associated;" meaning, as I was at no loss to perceive, Mrs. C—— in particular.

As yet I was not by any means fully aware of it; so I took the liberty to express a doubt upon the subject of the delusions he mentioned. Poor man, the anger that quivered in every feature! as I calmly, but decidedly expressed my sentiments respecting Mrs. C——, of whose pretensions to miraculous endowment, I said, I could not judge; but whose powerful influence upon my own mind, and whose prophetic message to me in my own house, had left impressions of her being a servant of God, which rendered it impossible for me to regard her with any sentiments but those of respect.

He soon ended his visit, by asking me if I wished him to go to prayer? a suggestion to which I assented, only because I did not very well know how to avoid doing so; but had I been aware of the spirit with which he was about to enter upon that holy act, I should have preferred giving him any degree of offence, rather than have permitted it. Such a prayer as it was! Such an invocation

for (as he phrased it) "this thy creature on the borders of eternity,"—or, as his tone and manner said, "*on the borders of perdition,*"—oh, such an address to God, for a poor soul whose every waking moment was at that time a breathing of heart for her heavenly Father's help, to "turn her from darkness unto light,"—it was fearful to think of! That he *intended* it for good, is all that can be said about it; and, that, God be thanked! he was not the final adjudicator of my doom, was the only comfort it afforded me.

The necessity of sending A— to her mother at length became imperative; and though as yet I was too imperfectly trained in acquaintance with my divine monitor, to be altogether fearless of doing wrong in sending her away,—yet, so well assured was I by the testimony of that monitor within my own heart, that many of the proceedings in which she was engaged could never be of God, that I told her calmly, but very decidedly, that if they were not dropped, she must prepare to quit my house. My habits of dependence upon her, added to my helplessness from indisposition, occasioned her to look upon this announcement as merely an impotent threat; and when, at last, she found I was really in earnest, she treated it with the contempt which seemed due to a determination that she scarcely expected to last for the space of four-and-twenty hours. My desire for her absence was at length so specific, that it could not at the moment

be disputed; and, evidently expecting a speedy summons to return, she departed.

I wondered at the serenity which clothed my mind during the first day of her absence. The total solitude to which she left me, was mournful indeed, but holy. The months of prayer and of bodily weakness through which I had been passing, and her own altered manner, together with the discomforts to which it introduced me, had well prepared me for what could scarcely now be called a bereavement. I was still in very weak health, and passed my time wholly in reclining on my sofa, but all immediate danger was over. The cough, and consequent hemorrhage, had, for some time left me; and now that with the departure of A—, the presence of the wild people with whom she was associated was also withdrawn, I daily, and hourly, experienced a renovation of mind, which, much against my will (for the dread I once had of death was gone, and I wished to die) extended also to my bodily frame.

All my domestic trials, however had not taken flight with A—. A very constant, and a very irritating one was left behind, in the girl who waited upon me; and of whose history, as mingled with mine at this period, I must give a brief sketch.

I became acquainted with her about three years previous to this time, when, with some other ladies, I was a visitor at a place exclusively devoted to the reception of females of the most depraved class,

to whom we endeavoured to impart religious aid and instruction. It was here, that I one day, discovered a young girl very ill, and very wretched, whose case I found, upon inquiry, to be accompanied with peculiarly distressing circumstances. She was but seventeen years of age, exceedingly handsome, though with the beauty of a virago, and evidently with the spirit of one, flashing out of her dark, fiery eyes. The poor creature wept so bitterly, and described herself as being so entirely an outcast, in consequence of being turned with her sister (equally degraded with herself) from her father's door, with no hope of its ever being opened to her again,—that I longed, if it were possible, to be helpful to her. At that time, and for some months afterwards, she was too ill for any employment; and being placed in the hospital, she remained there the whole of the winter; during which time she was constantly visited by A—, and assisted by me.

As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to occupy herself in earning her bread, and must, at all events, turn out of her present asylum, it became an act of duty on my part, having so long had my eye upon her, to do what I could in her behalf. I made a fruitless effort to propitiate her father, who was a labouring man residing about three miles from the place. I then consulted with a friend on the subject; who perceived, as I did, that vigilant care and protection could alone be of any use to the

unfortunate girl, and that the only effectual service I could render her, would be to take her into my own house as a servant. This was a very distasteful measure to adopt; but there seemed no alternative, except that of letting her go again to ruin; since the only home she could look to, was one very cordially offered to her, by her unhappy sister.

I was living in so much retirement, and my business in this world apparently ended, except in so far as I could be of any use to those who wanted my help, that much as I was disinclined for it, I resolved to take Lucy R—— at once into my house. I had another servant; so that her occupation was light, and consisted chiefly in needlework, which she could do very well if she chose. Indeed there was nothing that constitutes the work of a domestic servant, that she was not fully capable of performing; for she was a girl of great shrewdness and ability. Nevertheless, there was something about her, independently of the painful circumstances connected with her case, which I always disliked, and recoiled from; but as A— took her wholly in hand, I had very little to do with her. For some time she behaved tolerably well; her intractable temper being so well managed by the patience and good humour of A—, as seldom to break out in a way to disturb or irritate mine. There were extreme occasions, however, even then, when finding that the indomitable will of this creature was too much for her, A— was obliged to have

recourse to my authority to keep the peace. I had no difficulty in restoring order, by the simple announcement that she must promptly make her choice between obedience or departure; but the jar upon my spirit produced by such altercations with such a person, always occasioned me to say to A—, that I hoped nothing so dreadful would ever befall me, as to dwell under circumstances in which I should only have Lucy to wait upon me.

This did not exactly occur on A—'s leaving me, for I had another servant; but as she was wholly employed in the kitchen, and it was Lucy alone that was about me, it amounted to nearly the same thing as though she were my only domestic.

When she first found herself my personal attendant, the crafty creature, presuming that she was to step into the place of A—, was obsequious to the last degree, and perplexed me by her offers of service; more particularly by her request to be allowed to bring her work and sit with me, that she might be near at hand in case I required her assistance. Such was my dread of sulky looks, of banging doors, and of the other testimonies of gloom and violence, wherewith Lucy generally manifested her ill-tempers, that, in order to keep her tranquil and well behaved, I at first consented to her proposal; but her presence in my room was burdensome. Any presence would then have been so; for much as I missed that of A— when she first got into the habit of leaving me, I had long learned

to feel relieved by her absence. Not choosing to be afflicted with the company of Lucy, I soon gave her her dismissal; an affront upon her pride which the fierce-tempered girl neither forgot nor forgave; and as her situation afforded her the opportunity to teaze me, she did not fail to avail herself of it, by indulging in a succession of such spiteful tricks as could scarcely have entered into the imagination of a less wicked person than herself.

She soon detected my desire for as much silence as I could obtain. Whenever therefore, she was out of humour, which was almost every day, (for she detested the dulness of the house since A— went, though they were always disputing while she stayed,) she had a fine store of artillery to direct against me, in driving chairs and tables about the adjoining room, under pretext of sweeping it. Then, she would be continually coming up with messages respecting things of which the cook could have informed her as well as myself. The most extraordinary things were laid in the way to catch my eye, when by way of exercise, as I grew better, I took a turn out of one room into the other. Bits of old broken combs, cords, sealing wax, and anything that should cause me to speak, and say, "don't leave this rubbish here;" and then she would say, "I'm sure I know nothing about it;" and try to get into an argument on the subject. Anything, in short to stir me up, and set me talking, (a thing I was labouring to avoid) was delightful to her.

But the most trying of all her persecutions, was the determined way in which she *would* tell me all the news of the town that she could pick up, ostensibly for my diversion; though I repeatedly told her that I wished to know nothing of what was going on; especially did I desire to hear of none of the proceedings that were taking place at the house of Mrs. S——. Like it, or not, she would contrive to bring out her intelligence in some way or another.

Not a beggar came to the door, or any creature from whom she could extract a message to me, that she did not disturb me by appearing with it. But truly, as in the case of the Israelites under Pharaoh, the more they were vexed, the better they prospered, so, by endeavouring to turn this girl's persecution into a means of growing in patience and forbearance, it was converted into a rich and overflowing blessing. With one noble lesson, never to be lost, it largely enriched my experience. It showed me the glory and exactness of God's righteousness, in the retributive justice of which it was a token; for, most impossible was it for me to contemplate myself thus left with a selfish, ungrateful creature, bringing me perpetually under the harrow of her evil temper, without remembering how many wounds my own besetting sins had occasioned me to make upon the peace of others! I thought of my parents, and of many more; but most of all, I thought of my poor A—, such as she was when

first she came to live with me. I remembered her devoted, never-failing, patient love, and how often it was met with unkindness, how often repelled by harshness, when the irritability of my nature, exasperated by its trials, vented itself on whatever crossed its path, and crushed to atoms many a precious thing, even though it were affection as rare and valuable as hers. I beheld all this in the light which Lucy's bitter nature diffused over it, and I "became dumb and opened not my mouth," for I saw it was the Lord's doing. But oh! the hand of mercy which brought healing through the chastisement, and saving health with every drop of anguish it administered! How glorious was my life in those days of outward sorrow! days, which if I forget, "may my right hand forget her cunning!"

With the exception of the trials which this girl occasioned, and some grievous spiritual assaults of darkness and desolation which sometimes befell me, my path was in "green pastures," and my repose "by the waters of comfort." By such a lengthened and continued habit of concentrating my mind inwardly, I had acquired a new mode of life, and one that was practicable and beneficial, under the extraordinary circumstances that had befallen me; but which it is obvious could not have been so in those of common and every-day existence. I could then well understand what it was that drove persons who wished for a spiritual life, into deserts, and caves, and solitary places. The slightest word of

common discourse, brought a mist over the clearness and simplicity of my interior, which it required some hours of abstraction to dissipate. But this was a slight loss compared with the worse than bereavement which followed any demonstration of passion, or disturbed temper, that I might be betrayed into. The occasions of such an occurrence were rare; for too greatly did I prize my treasure, not to watch "lest the bands of the wicked should rob me;" but the malice of Lucy sometimes excited my anger; and then, how did she, and the spirits that ruled in her, triumph!

It will doubtless seem strange that I did not send this girl away; and very glad should I have been to do so, but her very wickedness was a hinderance to my taking that step; for I could give her no character, though she had been with me three years and a half, except as possessing the worst possible temper; neither could I honestly have withheld the knowledge of her previous history from any person who was about to engage her, if any would, under such circumstances have done so, which was hardly probable. Added to this, the girl herself had no wish to go. She knew very well that she could be nowhere so safe and so well off as with me; and though she did not value my protection as any shield to her from temptation and sin, she valued it as helping her to regain something like a place in society, and as delivering her from a position of ignominy, which her pride

(of which she had plenty) compelled her to see the shame and disgrace. I think too, that wild as their way of teaching was, the homilies of A—, and Mr. M——, had made a kind of impression upon her mind, that caused her to think it was a good thing to be religious. Be this as it may, she was sometimes deeply affected when she attended my domestic worship; which, though there were but three of us to make a family, I never omitted whilst she stayed under my roof; and when A— went, who used to officiate, I always deputed Lucy to read the chapter, which she did very well; and though often under visible ill-temper, yet, with due decorum. I never wanted power to pray in those days; for I had wants enough, both of my own, and those around me, to spread before the Lord; and very precious oftentimes were those seasons of supplication to me; and though lamentably short-lived in their effects upon Lucy, they were not, I believe, wholly profitless in the impression they occasionally made upon her. Bad as she was, I felt far more assured of her coming under the power of my ministrations, than I did of their being beneficial to my other servant; who was an elderly woman that I had known for years; exceedingly suitable to take care of my house, except that (as I found out afterwards) she was in the habit of drinking; always civil, even-tempered and obliging; but "hard as the nether millstone" in relation to everything that pertained to religion.

It was now so well known that I would see nobody (for I dared not,—I lost so much by conversation) that, with the exception of the Professor, who still looked in for a few minutes every two or three days to ask after me, and, as I grew better, to urge upon me the duty of getting out into the air,—nobody came near me. I read no books,—I did no work; — I lay for the whole day upon my sofa with my eyes closed, and most literally, in an inward and spiritual world. I dare not say what gleams of glory, what openings, what an insight into wisdom and truth, were sometimes given to me in this total abstraction from all earthly influences. I should only be scouted as a fanatic in making the attempt; besides the subject is too sacred. It is enough, that though that condition of mind has long passed away, under the influence of the things of time and sense, to which, in returning to common life, I also again became necessarily subject, — the remembrance of it, whilst God graciously grants me the exercise of my mental powers, can never be lost.

The last link I had to break, was my friendship with the Professor, which I then considered it to be my duty to sacrifice, but which I have lived to see was one that was not required of me. I can now perceive, that, although in his visits, the tone of his remarks was greatly in opposition to the spirituality I was seeking to establish in my habits of thought,—and that it did for a while, bring with it

a reminiscence of earth and earthly things that clouded and disturbed the atmosphere of my mind, I should have done better to have submitted to this interruption as coming in the course of things, and which, so far as it caused disquietude, I should have regarded with other sources of vexation, as a means of growing in patience and self-denial. It was under a sense of apprehended duty, that, finding the Professor, though not openly saying so, yet clearly indicating by his manner, that he considered me to be living and acting under the influence of deplorable fanaticism, I wrote to him a full explanation of the sentiments that occupied my mind, and very kindly, but very decidedly, informed him, that I could see him no more.

All was now gone, and I was wholly left alone; but my loneliness was only that which respected exterior things. I was left alone indeed, but it was in the possession of sublime peace, and occasional happiness, of which the memory is still fresh, and full of joy. And now, that the interval of nearly twenty years, has granted me the means which time can afford, of perceiving where I erred in judgment, I still believe, as I confidently at the time believed, that, eccentric as my course of existence must have appeared in the eyes of almost everybody who knew me,—it was the only course by which I could have been liberated from many chains that bound me to mistake and misery. Most assuredly also, was it the only course by

which I could have been conducted to a knowledge of divine truth, which has never since been shaken by a moment's doubt.

It only remains that I give the sequel of my story, in so far at least, as relates to that period of my life, beyond which, I do not propose to go, inasmuch as my mind since then, has known no variation; and it was the history of my mind alone which I stated it to be my intention to touch upon.

When I found that I was really getting well, and, that in respect to common sense and propriety, it would be impossible to continue so marked, and as people thought it, half crazy a mode of living (though, God knows! the craziness was to be found in the life I led when in the world, and I had only then come to my senses) I became disturbed in considering what I should do. A— was wholly gone. I had seen her indeed, at the lapse of a few months from her quitting me, and should have found no difficulty, had I been disposed to receive her back as my companion. But a variety of circumstances rendered this undesirable. Her pride had received a terrible wound in being compelled to perceive, that, notwithstanding her avowed conviction (of which Lucy often informed me) that I should soon be supplicating for her return, I had contrived for a period of nearly eight months, to get on very well without holding the slightest intercourse with her, and that it was by a movement on her side that we ever met again. She could not

forgive this; neither did I want her to do so, with any reference to its smoothing the way towards our reunion; though I should have been glad for her own sake, that she would have taken lower, humbler, and more suitable ground.

I began to see that I must rouse myself and return to some of the small occupations of life; but it was like one who feels that he must quit a paternal home, and go out to the rough chances of a cruel world, that I prepared myself for such an undertaking, and which I procrastinated as long as I possibly could. As for going out of the house to walk, and run the hazard of meeting any of my acquaintance, I could not endure to think of it. My peculiar mode of life for the last year and a half, had generated a feeling of the most singular timidity. I remember that Leigh Hunt, in his Autobiography, mentions something of the same kind, as having occurred to himself, after his long incarceration in prison for a political offence. I was afraid of everything, and everybody. Nothing astonished me so much, as the reckless way in which people lived, and acted, and talked, and were thrown out, as it seemed to me, amongst outward things of such a false, polluting, bewildering character, that, how they could see their way through them, and get out of them without mischief, appeared to me little less than marvellous. I had been so long accustomed to the sense of shelter and security, which the mere act of closing my eyes, and laying my head upon

the pillow of my sofa, afforded me, and of stilling every anxious thought with a few words of mental prayer, that I dreaded as much as if I were going into a field of battle, to quit this city of refuge.

That which I knew not how to do for myself, was, at length done for me. The force of circumstances drove me from a rest, which, from having been my allowed comfort, was beginning to be my snare.

The conduct of Lucy, which had with difficulty been endurable, became at last so totally intolerable, that I saw it to be my duty to send her away. Wearied with my adherence to a mode of life, which, from its quietude, she detested, — disappointed too, in the hope with which two or three visits from A— had inspired her of that individual's return, she became so insolent, and even cruel, in her contrivances to molest me, that I came to the resolution of dismissing her from my service. She was overwhelmed with surprise; for she was sufficiently artful to have penetrated into the reasons that had induced me to keep her so long; and was well enough acquainted with my nature, to trust to the scruples of conscience, which would occasion me to shrink from turning her adrift.

Those scruples I satisfied by placing her with a married, and, as far as I could learn, a respectable relative of her own; and providing for her maintenance, by a weekly allowance, till I had considered what I should do with her. I may dismiss this

girl's history by saying, that although she received from me every assistance which pecuniary help could give her, and from a kind and benevolent lady whom I interested in her case, all that a watchful guardianship could afford her; though we had her instructed in a branch of needlework, in the exercise of which, she might with proper industry, have earned a fair subsistence; and though, when this failed, the efforts of A— (I never would myself speak to her character) succeeded in obtaining her a situation as servant in a family,—all failed. She settled to nothing; but following the impulses of her own unsubdued will, and governed by the inveterate idleness which is by no means one of the least evils that accompany the course of vice to which she first fell a victim,—she returned to that course, and in its awful gulfs was wholly lost to my further knowledge of her history.

Her departure brought with it a necessity for some exertion. I had a servant to hire in her place, and to look over such of my affairs as had fallen under her direction; and which I found, as might have been expected, in the most woeful state of disorder. Household linen had been left to run to rags, for the want of mending; nothing was in its place, or appropriated to its proper use. Tea-cloths and towels had been used for dusters; and from the appearance of many of them, to clean the fire-irons and candlesticks. The putting these things to rights, gave me occupation for several

weeks. I had also employment in teaching my new servant to write. I made frocks and pinafores too, with a hope that never failed of fulfilment, that children would somewhere be forthcoming, whom they would fit.

It was delightful to perceive what a genuine enjoyment accompanied these simple occupations. I remember the remark of a worthy Quaker lady, as recorded in the Life of John Barclay, and made in reference to the dealings of God; "*he can bless a little;—and he can blast a great deal.*" I can set my seal to the truth of this observation. The blessing of the Lord was upon the humble pursuits in which I was now engaged; that blessing, of which it is truly said, that "it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it;" an enhancement of satisfaction, which is seldom united to any other sort of blessings.

In this manner the greater part of another year wore away, and though far from strong, I was too well restored to health to allow of my properly continuing confined to the house. It seemed to me that the time was come, in which it would be advisable for me to take a step, that, painful as it would once have proved, was now only desirable. This was, to quit the place altogether. I had lived in it long enough to know it as the sepulchre of my youth,—my friends, and every earthly joy. It was little else than a desert to me; and without a sigh, at six o'clock on a beautiful summer's morning,

with an old servant as my companion (the Martha, whom I have named once before) who had lived in my father's house during my childhood, and whose advancing age was now comforted in the possession of an almshouse in the town, — I departed for a present residence amongst some distant relatives in the country, who had a vacant cottage at my disposal.

How enchanting was the consciousness of freedom, how exquisite the sensation of renewed existence, as, for the first time for more than two years, I crossed the threshold of my door, to get into the carriage that was waiting at it! The first thing that met my eye was a luxuriant rose tree, which the last time I saw it, was only a few yards high, but which now covered the whole front of my house. "You have been quietly growing, and flourishing, and troubling nobody," I thought; "God grant that I may have been doing the same!"

Well could I understand, as we bounded along the road, and every object I looked upon wore something of a charm to me, — those lines of the poet;*

> "The hues of life more brightly glow,
> Chastised by sabler tints of woe;
> And blended form, with artful strife,
> The strength and harmony of life.
>
> "See the wretch who long has toss'd
> Upon the thorny couch of pain,

* Gray.

But once regain his vigour lost,
And live, and breathe, and walk again;

" The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise! "

I remained in the country, only during the winter; for I discovered that I had made a great mistake in expecting to find retirement, and a shelter from observation in a village. The smallness of the circle there, and the limited number of those who revolved in it, occasioned every fresh comer to be the mark of general notice. Everybody in the place knew what I had for dinner, and what time I got up in the morning and went to bed at night, and how I passed the intermediate hours. After a few oscillations hither and thither, the suburbs of London seemed to offer me all I wanted, and there, some years since, I settled down.

The scruples with which my mind had been fettered by the influences of this and the other religionist, continued for a long time to imprison it, and totally denuded me of the free exercise of such abilities as the goodness of God had bestowed upon me. When, on my replying in the negative to an enquiry, " if I ever wrote now? " I heard the remark, " well, that's a good *thing!*—I am very glad to hear *that;* "—and when I have witnessed solemn looks, and deep-drawn sighs, at the idea of music, on the part of persons whose whole existence I

knew to be devoted to the service of God,—it was but proper, I thought, to pause and consider well and long, how far it might, or might not be lawful for me, to resume such pursuits.

I have at length found liberty to "break their bonds, and to cast away their cords from me;" and, in such an occupation as this,—or, in the exercise of my musical abilities, or in any other way which the witness in my conscience does not oppose, I am taught to "let the counsel of my own heart stand;"—"for," as saith the wise man, "there is no man more faithful unto thee than it. For a man's mind is sometimes wont to tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above in an high tower." *

I have arrived at a point of experience which occasions me to accept all human sentiments and opinions, with much hesitation and distrust. I see that there is a natural tendency in human beings to go to extremes, and to denounce those, who, on the subject of religion, choose to think for themselves. I perceive also, that the evil of corrupt nature works nowhere so powerfully, nor so unsuspectedly as in religious matters; and that many sincere persons think they are doing God service by condemning their fellow creatures, when, in all probability, they are, unconsciously indeed, but very certainly, indulging the latent malice, and love of

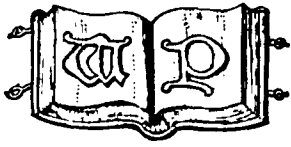
* Ecclesiasticus, xxxvii. 13, 14.

tormenting, which make so prominent a part of human corruption. I can discern that the views of such persons are so one-sided, and so narrow, that it is scarcely possible to make them accord with reason; and that when once we abandon the use of reason, there is nothing too preposterous, or too absurd, or even too cruel, for the human being to engage in.

The great desideratum seems to me to be the possession of a well grounded confidence in the dictates of an interior and infallible guide. The most excellent of truths that have to pass through faulty and infirm agents in their transmission, can never come to us without alloy. This is to be remembered, and allowed for; or else there will be (as at one period of my life there was for me) no peace, no rest, no belief of having done one's duty till the greater part of our friends and acquaintance are renounced as infidels, and the general conduct is that of a person who had, upon principle, abjured the use of common sense.

The very essence of fanaticism consists in taking our stand upon some particular doctrine, and, forgetting how limited and low our knowledge (as imperfect creatures) is likely to be of the full bearing of that doctrine,—the legislating from it for all the world; and, though purblind with prejudice, and cramped with bigotry, still supposing that we are seeing and judging in the freedom and impartiality of the Spirit of Truth.

In a word, "I have seen an end of all perfection," — and am come to the commandment of the Lord, which "is exceeding broad." Here I rest, and on this I hope;—committing my helpless soul to Him who has been with me in all my trials and temptations; — and who, in the sharpest of them, never "took his loving kindness utterly away, nor suffered his faithfulness to fail."



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